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THE WORKS

OF

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Harold.

HAROLD.

Photogravure from painting by F. T. Merrill.

Édition de Luxe

THE WORKS

OF

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Poet Laureate

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. ROLFE, LITT. D

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOL. IX.

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Édition de Luxe.

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HAROLD:

A DRAMA.

To His Excellency

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LYTTON,

Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

My dear Lord Lytton, — After old-world records — such as the Bayeux tapestry and the Roman de Rou, — Edward Freeman's History of the Norman Conquest, and your father's Historical Romance treating of the same times, have been mainly helpful to me in writing this Drama. Your father dedicated his 'Harold' to my father's brother; allow me to dedicate my 'Harold' to yourself.

A. TENNYSON.

SHOW-DAY AT BATTLE ABBEY, 1876.

A GARDEN here — May breath and bloom of spring —
The cuckoo yonder from an English elm
Crying, 'With my false egg I overwhelm
The native nest;' and fancy hears the ring
Of harness, and that deathful arrow sing,
And Saxon battle-axe clang on Norman helm.
Here rose the dragon-banner of our realm;
Here fought, here fell, our Norman-slander'd king.
O Garden blossoming out of English blood!
O strange hate-healer Time! We stroll and stare
Where might made right eight hundred years ago;
Might, right? ay, good, so all things make for good —
But he and he, if soul be soul, are where
Each stands full face with all he did below.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

KING EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

STIGAND, *created Archbishop of Canterbury by the Antipope Benedict.*

ALDRED, *Archbishop of York.*

THE NORMAN BISHOP OF LONDON.

HAROLD, *Earl of Wessex, afterwards King of England* } *Sons of Godwin.*
TOSTIG, *Earl of Northumbria*
GURTH, *Earl of East Anglia*
LEOFWIN, *Earl of Kent and Essex*
WULFNOTH

COUNT WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

WILLIAM MALET, *a Norman Noble.*[1]

EDWIN, *Earl of Mercia* } *Sons of Alfgar of Mercia.*
MORCAR, *Earl of Northumbria after Tostig*

GAMEL, *a Northumbrian Thane.*

GUY, *Count of Ponthieu.*

ROLF, *a Ponthieu Fisherman.*

HUGH MARGOT, *a Norman Monk.*

OSGOD *and* ATHELRIC, *Canons from Waltham.*

THE QUEEN, *Edward the Confessor's Wife, Daughter of Godwin.*

ALDWYTH, *Daughter of Alfgar and widow of Griffyth, King of Wales.*

EDITH, *Ward of King Edward.*

Courtiers, Earls and Thanes, Men-at-Arms, Canons of Waltham, Fishermen, etc.

[1] . . . quidam partim Normannus et Anglus
Compater Heraldi. (*Guy of Amiens*, 587.)

HAROLD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — London. The King's Palace.

(*A comet seen through the open window.*)

Aldwyth, Gamel, Courtiers *talking together.*

First Courtier.

Lo! there once more — this is the seventh night!
Yon grimly-glaring, treble-brandish'd scourge
Of England!

Second Courtier.

Horrible!

First Courtier.

Look you, there 's a star
That dances in it as mad with agony!

Third Courtier.

Ay, like a spirit in hell who skips and flies
To right and left, and cannot scape the flame.

Second Courtier.

Steam'd upward from the undescendible
Abysm.

First Courtier.

Or floated downward from the throne
Of God Almighty.

Aldwyth.

Gamel, son of Orm,
What thinkest thou this means?

Gamel.

War, my dear lady!

Aldwyth.

Doth this affright thee?

Gamel.

Mightily, my dear lady!

Aldwyth.

Stand by me then, and look upon my face,
Not on the comet.

(*Enter* MORCAR.)

Brother! why so pale?

MORCAR.

It glares in heaven, it flares upon the Thames,
The people are as thick as bees below,
They hum like bees,—they cannot speak—for awe;
Look to the skies, then to the river, strike
Their hearts, and hold their babies up to it.
I think that they would Molochize them too,
To have the heavens clear.

ALDWYTH.

They fright not me.

(*Enter* LEOFWIN, *after him* GURTH.)

Ask thou Lord Leofwin what he thinks of this!

MORCAR.

Lord Leofwin, dost thou believe that these
Three rods of blood-red fire up yonder mean
The doom of England and the wrath of Heaven?

BISHOP OF LONDON (*passing*).

Did ye not cast with bestial violence

Our holy Norman bishops down from all
Their thrones in England? I alone remain.
Why should not Heaven be wroth?

Leofwin.

With us, or thee?

Bishop of London.

Did ye not outlaw your archbishop Robert,
Robert of Jumièges — well-nigh murder him too?
Is there no reason for the wrath of Heaven?

Leofwin.

Why, then the wrath of Heaven hath three tails,
The devil only one.

[*Exit* Bishop of London.

(*Enter* Archbishop Stigand.)

Ask *our* archbishop.
Stigand should know the purposes of Heaven.

Stigand.

Not I. I cannot read the face of heaven;
Perhaps our vines will grow the better for it.

Leofwin (*laughing*).

He can but read the king's face on his coins.

Stigand.

Ay, ay, young lord, *there* the king's face is power.

Gurth.

O father, mock not at a public fear,
But tell us, is this pendent hell in heaven
A harm to England?

Stigand.

Ask it of King Edward!
And he may tell thee *I* am a harm to England.
Old uncanonical Stigand — ask of *me*
Who had my pallium from an Antipope!
Not he the man — for in our windy world
What 's up is faith, what 's down is heresy.
Our friends, the Normans, holp to shake his chair.
I have a Norman fever on me, son,
And cannot answer sanely . . . What it means?
Ask our broad earl.

[*Pointing to* Harold, *who enters.*

Harold (*seeing* Gamel).

Hail, Gamel, son of Orm!
Albeit no rolling stone, my good friend Gamel,
Thou hast rounded since we met. Thy life at home
Is easier than mine here. Look! am I not
Work-wan, flesh-fallen?

Gamel.

Art thou sick, good earl?

Harold.

Sick as an autumn swallow for a voyage,
Sick for an idle week of hawk and hound
Beyond the seas — a change! When camest thou hither?

Gamel.

To-day, good earl.

Harold.

Is the North quiet, Gamel?

Gamel.

Nay, there be murmurs, for thy brother breaks us

With over-taxing — quiet, ay, as yet —
Nothing as yet.

Harold.

Stand by him, mine old friend,
Thou art a great voice in Northumberland!
Advise him: speak him sweetly, he will hear thee.
He is passionate but honest. Stand thou by him!
More talk of this to-morrow, if yon weird sign
Not blast us in our dreams. — Well, father Stigand —

[*To* Stigand, *who advances to him.*

Stigand (*pointing to the comet*).

War there, my son? is that the doom of England?

Harold.

Why not the doom of all the world as well?
For all the world sees it as well as England.
These meteors came and went before our day,
Not harming any: it threatens us no more

Than French or Norman. War? the worst
that follows
Things that seem jerk'd out of the common rut
Of Nature is the hot religious fool,
Who, seeing war in heaven, for heaven's credit
Makes it on earth: but look, where Edward
draws
A faint foot hither, leaning upon Tostig.
He hath learnt to love our Tostig much of
late.

Leofwin.

And *he* hath learnt, despite the tiger in him,
To sleek and supple himself to the king's
hand.

Gurth.

I trust the kingly touch that cures the evil
May serve to charm the tiger out of him.

Leofwin.

He hath as much of cat as tiger in him.
Our Tostig loves the hand and not the man.

Harold.

Nay! Better die than lie!

Enter KING, QUEEN, *and* TOSTIG.

EDWARD.

In heaven signs!
Signs upon earth! signs everywhere! your priests
Gross, worldly, simoniacal, unlearn'd!
They scarce can read their Psalter; and your churches
Uncouth, unhandsome, while in Normanland
God speaks thro' abler voices, as He dwells
In statelier shrines. I say not this, as being
Half Norman-blooded, nor as some have held,
Because I love the Norman better — no,
But dreading God's revenge upon this realm
For narrowness and coldness; and I say it
For the last time perchance, before I go
To find the sweet refreshment of the Saints.
I have lived a life of utter purity:
I have builded the great church of Holy Peter:
I have wrought miracles — to God the glory! —
And miracles will in my name be wrought
Hereafter. — I have fought the fight and go —
I see the flashing of the gates of pearl —

And it is well with me, tho' some of you
Have scorn'd me — ay — but after I am gone
Woe, woe to England! I have had a vision;
The Seven Sleepers in the cave at Ephesus
Have turn'd from right to left.

Harold.

My most dear master,
What matters? let them turn from left to right
And sleep again.

Tostig.

Too hardy with thy king!
A life of prayer and fasting well may see
Deeper into the mysteries of heaven
Than thou, good brother.

Aldwyth (*aside*).

Sees he into thine,
That thou wouldst have his promise for the crown?

Edward.

Tostig says true; my son, thou art too hard,
Not stagger'd by this ominous earth and heaven;

But heaven and earth are threads of the same loom,
Play into one another, and weave the web
That may confound thee yet.

HAROLD.

Nay, I trust not,
For I have served thee long and honestly.

EDWARD.

I know it, son; I am not thankless: thou
Hast broken all my foes, lighten'd for me
The weight of this poor crown, and left me time
And peace for prayer to gain a better one.
Twelve years of service! England loves thee for it.
Thou art the man to rule her!

ALDWYTH (*aside*).

So, not Tostig!

HAROLD.

And after those twelve years a boon, my king,
Respite, a holiday: thyself wast wont

To love the chase: thy leave to set my feet
On board, and hunt and hawk beyond the seas!

Edward.

What, with this flaming horror overhead?

Harold.

Well, when it passes then.

Edward.

Ay, if it pass.
Go not to Normandy — go not to Normandy.

Harold.

And wherefore not, my king, to Normandy?
Is not my brother Wulfnoth hostage there
For my dead father's loyalty to thee?
I pray thee, let me hence and bring him home.

Edward.

Not thee, my son: some other messenger.

Harold.

And why not me, my lord, to Normandy?
Is not the Norman Count thy friend and mine?

Edward.

I pray thee, do not go to Normandy.

Harold.

Because my father drove the Normans out
Of England? — That was many a summer gone —
Forgotten and forgiven by them and thee.

Edward.

Harold, I will not yield thee leave to go.

Harold.

Why, then to Flanders. I will hawk and hunt
In Flanders.

Edward.

Be there not fair woods and fields
In England? Wilful, wilful! Go — the Saints
Pilot and prosper all thy wandering out
And homeward! — Tostig, I am faint again. —
Son Harold, I will in and pray for thee.

[*Exit, leaning on* Tostig, *and followed by* Stigand, Morcar, *and* Courtiers.

Harold.

What lies upon the mind of our good king,
That he should harp this way on Normandy?

Queen.

Brother, the king is wiser than he seems;
And Tostig knows it; Tostig loves the king.

Harold.

And love should know; and — be the king so wise, —
Then Tostig too were wiser than he seems.
I love the man, but not his phantasies.

(*Re-enter* Tostig.)

Well, brother,
When didst thou hear from thy Northumbria?

Tostig.

When did I hear aught but this '*When*' from thee?
Leave me alone, brother, with my Northumbria:
She is *my* mistress, let *me* look to her!
The king hath made me earl; make me not fool!
Nor make the king a fool, who made me earl!

Harold.

No, Tostig — lest I make myself a fool
Who made the king who made thee, make thee earl.

Tostig.

Why chafe me then? Thou knowest I soon go wild.

Gurth.

Come, come! as yet thou art not gone so wild
But thou canst hear the best and wisest of us.

Harold.

So says old Gurth, not I: yet hear! thine earldom,
Tostig, hath been a kingdom. Their old crown
Is yet a force among them, a sun set
But leaving light enough for Alfgar's house
To strike thee down by — nay, this ghastly glare
May heat their fancies.

Tostig.

My most worthy brother,
Thou art the quietest man in all the world —

Ay, ay, and wise in peace and great in war —
Pray God the people choose thee for their king!
But all the powers of the house of Godwin
Are not enframed in thee.

Harold.

Thank the Saints, no!
But thou hast drain'd them shallow by thy tolls,
And thou art ever here about the king:
Thine absence well may seem a want of care.
Cling to their love; for, now the sons of Godwin
Sit topmost in the field of England, envy,
Like the rough bear beneath the tree, good brother,
Waits till the man let go.

Tostig.

Good counsel truly!
I heard from my Northumbria yesterday.

Harold.

How goes it then with thy Northumbria? Well?

TOSTIG.

And wouldst thou that it went aught else than well?

HAROLD.

I would it went as well as with mine earldom,
Leofwin's and Gurth's.

TOSTIG.

Ye govern milder men.

GURTH.

We have made them milder by just government.

TOSTIG.

Ay, ever give yourselves your own good word.

LEOFWIN.

An honest gift, by all the Saints, if giver
And taker be but honest! but they bribe
Each other, and so often, an honest world
Will not believe them.

HAROLD.

I may tell thee, Tostig,
I heard from thy Northumberland to-day.

Tostig.

From spies of thine to spy my nakedness
In my poor North!

Harold.

There is a movement there,
A blind one — nothing yet.

Tostig.

Crush it at once
With all the power I have! — I must — I will! —
Crush it half-born! Fool still? or wisdom there,
My wise head-shaking Harold?

Harold.

Make not thou
The nothing something. Wisdom when in power
And wisest should not frown as Power, but smile
As kindness, watching all, till the true *must*
Shall make her strike as Power: but when to strike —

O Tostig, O dear brother — if they prance,
Rein in, not lash them, lest they rear and run
And break both neck and axle.

Tostig.

Good again!
Good counsel tho' scarce needed. Pour not water
In the full vessel running out at top
To swamp the house.

Leofwin.

Nor thou be a wild thing
Out of the waste, to turn and bite the hand
Would help thee from the trap.

Tostig.

Thou playest in tune.

Leofwin.

To the deaf adder thee, that wilt not dance
However wisely charm'd.

Tostig.

No more, no more!

Gurth.

I likewise cry 'no more.' Unwholesome talk
For Godwin's house! Leofwin, thou hast a tongue!
Tostig, thou look'st as thou wouldst spring upon him.
Saint Olaf, not while I am by! Come, come,
Join hands, let brethren dwell in unity;
Let kith and kin stand close as our shield-wall,
Who breaks us then? I say, thou hast a tongue,
And Tostig is not stout enough to bear it.
Vex him not, Leofwin.

Tostig.

No, I am not vext,—
Altho' ye seek to vex me, one and all.
I have to make report of my good earldom
To the good king who gave it — not to you —
Not any of you. — I am not vext at all.

Harold.

The king? the king is ever at his prayers;
In all that handles matter of the state
I am the king.

Tostig.

That shalt thou never be
If I can thwart thee.

Harold.

Brother, brother!

Tostig.

Away!

[*Exit* Tostig.

Queen.

Spite of this grisly star ye three must gall
Poor Tostig.

Leofwin.

Tostig, sister, galls himself;
He cannot smell a rose but pricks his nose
Against the thorn, and rails against the rose.

Queen.

I am the only rose of all the stock
That never thorn'd him; Edward loves him, so
Ye hate him. Harold always hated him.
Why — how they fought when boys — and, Holy Mary!
How Harold used to beat him!

Harold.

Why, boys will fight.
Leofwin would often fight me, and I beat him.
Even old Gurth would fight. I had much ado
To hold mine own against old Gurth. Old Gurth,
We fought like great states for grave cause; but Tostig —
On a sudden — at a something — for a nothing —
The boy would fist me hard, and when we fought
I conquer'd, and he loved me none the less,
Till thou wouldst get him all apart, and tell him
That where he was but worsted he was wrong'd.
Ah! thou hast taught the king to spoil him too;
Now the spoilt child sways both. Take heed, take heed;
Thou art the queen; ye are boy and girl no more:
Side not with Tostig in any violence,
Lest thou be sideways guilty of the violence.

QUEEN.

Come, fall not foul on me. I leave thee, brother.

HAROLD.

Nay, my good sister —

[*Exeunt* QUEEN, HAROLD, GURTH, *and* LEOFWIN.

ALDWYTH.

Gamel, son of Orm,
What thinkest thou this means?

[*Pointing to the comet.*

GAMEL.

War, my dear lady,
War, waste, plague, famine, all malignities.

ALDWYTH.

It means the fall of Tostig from his earldom.

GAMEL.

That were too small a matter for a comet!

ALDWYTH.

It means the lifting of the house of Alfgar.

Gamel.

Too small! a comet would not show for that!

Aldwyth.

Not small for thee, if thou canst compass it.

Gamel.

Thy love?

Aldwyth.

As much as I can give thee, man;
This Tostig is, or like to be, a tyrant;
Stir up thy people: oust him!

Gamel.

And thy love?

Aldwyth.

As much as thou canst bear.

Gamel.

I can bear all,
And not be giddy.

Aldwyth.

No more now: to-morrow.

SCENE II. — In the Garden. The King's House near London. Sunset.

Edith.

Mad for thy mate, passionate nightingale . . .
I love thee for it — ay, but stay a moment;
He can but stay a moment: he is going.
I fain would hear him coming! . . . near me
. . . near,
Somewhere — To draw him nearer with a charm
Like thine to thine.

(*Singing.*)

Love is come with a song and a smile,
Welcome Love with a smile and a song:
Love can stay but a little while.
Why cannot he stay? They call him away:
Ye do him wrong, ye do him wrong;
Love will stay for a whole life long.

Enter Harold.

Harold.

The nightingales in Havering-atte-Bower
Sang out their loves so loud that Edward's
prayers

Were deafen'd and he pray'd them dumb, and thus
I dumb thee too, my wingless nightingale!
[*Kissing her.*

Edith.

Thou art my music! Would their wings were mine
To follow thee to Flanders! Must thou go?

Harold.

Not must, but will. It is but for one moon.

Edith.

Leaving so many foes in Edward's hall
To league against thy weal. The Lady Aldwyth
Was here to-day, and when she touch'd on thee
She stammer'd in her hate; I am sure she hates thee,
Pants for thy blood.

Harold.

Well, I have given her cause —
I fear no woman.

EDITH.

Hate not one who felt
Some pity for thy hater! I am sure
Her morning wanted sunlight, she so praised
The convent and lone life — within the pale —
Beyond the passion. Nay — she held with Edward,
At least methought she held with holy Edward,
That marriage was half sin.

HAROLD.

A lesson worth
Finger and thumb — thus (*snaps his fingers*).
And my answer to it —
See here — an interwoven H and E!
Take thou this ring; I will demand his ward
From Edward when I come again. Ay, would she?
She to shut up my blossom in the dark!
Thou art *my* nun, thy cloister in mine arms.

EDITH (*taking the ring*).

Yea, but Earl Tostig —

Harold.

That 's a truer fear!
For if the North take fire, I should be back;
I shall be, soon enough.

Edith.

Ay, but last night
An evil dream that ever came and went —

Harold.

A gnat that vext thy pillow! Had I been by,
I would have spoil'd his horn. My girl, what
was it?

Edith.

Oh! that thou wert not going!
For so methought it was our marriage-morn,
And while we stood together, a dead man
Rose from behind the altar, tore away
My marriage ring, and rent my bridal veil;
And then I turn'd, and saw the church all fill'd
With dead men upright from their graves, and
all
The dead men made at thee to murder thee,
But thou didst back thyself against a pillar,

And strike among them with thy battle-axe —
There, what a dream!

HAROLD.

Well, well — a dream — no more!

EDITH.

Did not Heaven speak to men in dreams of old?

HAROLD.

Ay — well — of old. I tell thee what, my child;
Thou hast misread this merry dream of thine,
Taken the rifted pillars of the wood
For smooth stone columns of the sanctuary,
The shadows of a hundred fat dead deer
For dead men's ghosts. True, that the battle-axe
Was out of place; it should have been the bow. —
Come, thou shalt dream no more such dreams; I swear it,
By mine own eyes — and these two sapphires — these
Twin rubies, that are amulets against all
The kisses of all kind of womankind.

In Flanders, till the sea shall roll me back
To tumble at thy feet.

Edith.

That would but shame me,
Rather than make me vain. The sea may roll
Sand, shingle, shore-weed, not the living rock
Which guards the land.

Harold.

Except it be a soft one,
And undereaten to the fall. Mine amulet . . .
This last . . . upon thine eyelids, to shut in
A happier dream. Sleep, sleep, and thou shalt see
My grayhounds fleeting like a beam of light,
And hear my peregrine and her bells in heaven;
And other bells on earth, which yet are heaven's;
Guess what they be.

Edith.

He cannot guess who knows.
Farewell, my king.

Harold.

Not yet, but then — my queen.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter Aldwyth *from the thicket.*

Aldwyth.

The kiss that charms thine eyelids into sleep
Will hold mine waking. Hate him? I could love him
More, tenfold, than this fearful child can do;
Griffyth I hated: why not hate the foe
Of England? Griffyth, when I saw him flee,
Chased deer-like up his mountains, all the blood
That should have only pulsed for Griffyth beat
For his pursuer. I love him, or think I love him.
If he were King of England, I his queen,
I might be sure of it. Nay, I do love him. —
She must be cloister'd somehow, lest the king
Should yield his ward to Harold's will. What harm?
She hath but blood enough to live, not love. —
When Harold goes and Tostig, shall I play

The craftier Tostig with him? fawn upon him?
Chime in with all? 'O thou more saint than
king!'
And that were true enough. 'O blessed relics!'
'O Holy Peter!' If he found me thus,
Harold might hate me; he is broad and honest,
Breathing an easy gladness . . . not like
Aldwyth . . .
For which I strangely love him. Should not
England
Love Aldwyth, if she stay the feuds that part
The sons of Godwin from the sons of Alfgar
By such a marrying? Courage, noble Aldwyth!
Let all thy people bless thee!
Our wild Tostig,
Edward hath made him earl: he would be
king:—
The dog that snapt the shadow dropt the bone.
I trust he may do well, this Gamel, whom
I play upon, that he may play the note
Whereat the dog shall howl and run, and
Harold
Hear the king's music, all alone with him,
Pronounced his heir of England.

I see the goal and half the way to it.—
Peace-lover is our Harold for the sake
Of England's wholeness — so — to shake the North
With earthquake and disruption — some division —
Then fling mine own fair person in the gap
A sacrifice to Harold, a peace-offering,
A scapegoat marriage — all the sins of both
The houses on mine head — then a fair life
And bless the Queen of England!

Morcar (*coming from the thicket*).

Art thou assured
By this, that Harold loves but Edith?

Aldwyth.

Morcar!
Why creep'st thou like a timorous beast of prey
Out of the bush by night?

Morcar.

I follow'd thee.

Aldwyth.

Follow my lead, and I will make thee earl.

Morcar.

What lead then?

Aldwyth.

Thou shalt flash it secretly
Among the good Northumbrian folk, that I —
That Harold loves me — yea, and presently
That I and Harold are betroth'd — and last —
Perchance that Harold wrongs me; tho' I would not
That it should come to that.

Morcar.

I will both flash
And thunder for thee.

Aldwyth.

I said 'secretly;'
It is the flash that murders, the poor thunder
Never harm'd head.

Morcar.

But thunder may bring down
That which the flash hath stricken.

Aldwyth.

Down with Tostig!
That first of all. — And when doth Harold go?

Morcar.

To-morrow — first to Bosham, then to Flanders.

Aldwyth.

Not to come back till Tostig shall have shown
And redden'd with his people's blood the teeth
That shall be broken by us — yea, and thou
Chair'd in his place. Good-night, and dream thyself
Their chosen earl.

[*Exit* Aldwyth.

Morcar.

Earl first, and after that
Who knows I may not dream myself their king?

ACT II.

SCENE I. — Seashore. Ponthieu. Night.

Harold *and his* Men, *wrecked.*

Harold.

Friends, in that last inhospitable plunge
Our boat hath burst her ribs; but ours are whole;
I have but bark'd my hands.

Attendant.

I dug mine into
My old fast friend the shore, and clinging thus
Felt the remorseless outdraught of the deep
Haul like a great strong fellow at my legs,
And then I rose and ran. The blast that came
So suddenly hath fallen as suddenly —
Put thou the comet and this blast together —

Harold.

Put thou thyself and mother-wit together.
Be not a fool!

(*Enter* FISHERMEN *with torches*, HAROLD *going up to one of them*, ROLF.)

Wicked sea-will-o'-the-wisp!
Wolf of the shore! dog, with thy lying lights
Thou hast betray'd us on these rocks of thine!

ROLF.

Ay, but thou liest as loud as the black herring-pond behind thee. We be fishermen; I came to see after my nets.

HAROLD.

To drag us into them. Fishermen? devils!
Who, while ye fish for men with your false fires,
Let the great Devil fish for your own souls.

ROLF.

Nay then, we be liker the blessed Apostles; *they* were fishers of men, Father Jean says.

HAROLD.

I had liefer that the fish had swallowed me,
Like Jonah, than have known there were such devils.
What 's to be done?

[*To his* MEN — *goes apart with them.*

Fisherman.

Rolf, what fish did swallow Jonah?

Rolf.

A whale!

Fisherman.

Then a whale to a whelk we have swallowed the King of England. I saw him over there. Look thee, Rolf, when I was down in the fever, *she* was down with the hunger, and thou didst stand by her and give her thy crabs, and set her up again, till now, by the patient Saints, she 's as crabb'd as ever.

Rolf.

And I 'll give her my crabs again, when thou art down again.

Fisherman.

I thank thee, Rolf. Run thou to Count Guy; he is hard at hand. Tell him what hath crept into our creel, and he will fee thee as freely as he will wrench this outlander's ransom out of him — and why not? for what right had he to get himself wrecked on another man's land?

Rolf.

Thou art the human-heartedest, Christian-charitiest of all crab-catchers. Share and share alike! [*Exit.*

Harold (*to* Fisherman).

Fellow, dost thou catch crabs?

Fisherman.

As few as I may in a wind, and less than I would in a calm. Ay!

Harold.

I have a mind that thou shalt catch no more.

Fisherman.

How?

Harold.

I have a mind to brain thee with mine axe.

Fisherman.

Ay, do, do, and our great count-crab will make his nippers meet in thine heart; he 'll sweat it out of thee, he 'll sweat it out of thee! Look, he 's here! He 'll speak for himself. Hold thine own, if thou canst!

Enter Guy, Count of Ponthieu.

Harold.

Guy, Count of Ponthieu?

Guy.

Harold, Earl of Wessex!

Harold.

Thy villains with their lying lights have wreck'd us!

Guy.

Art thou not Earl of Wessex?

Harold.

In mine earldom
A man may hang gold bracelets on a bush,
And leave them for a year, and coming back
Find them again.

Guy.

Thou art a mighty man
In thine own earldom!

Harold.

Were such murderous liars
In Wessex — if I caught them, they should hang

Cliff-gibbeted for sea-marks; our sea-mew
Winging their only wail!

Guy.

Ay, but my men
Hold that the shipwreckt are accursed of God;—
What hinders me to hold with mine own men?

Harold.

The Christian manhood of the man who reigns!

Guy.

Ay, rave thy worst, but in our oubliettes
Thou shalt or rot or ransom.—Hale him hence!
[*To one of his* Attendants.
Fly thou to William; tell him we have Harold.

SCENE II. — Bayeux. Palace.

Count William *and* William Malet.

William.

We hold our Saxon woodcock in the springe,
But he begins to flutter. As I think

He was thine host in England when I went
To visit Edward.

Malet.

Yea, and there, my lord,
To make allowance for their rougher fashions,
I found him all a noble host should be.

William.

Thou art his friend: thou know'st my claim on England
Thro' Edward's promise: we have him in the toils.
And it were well, if thou shouldst let him feel
How dense a fold of danger nets him round,
So that he bristle himself against my will.

Malet.

What would I do, my lord, if I were you?

William.

What wouldst thou do?

Malet.

My lord, he is thy guest.

William.

Nay, by the splendour of God, no guest of mine.
He came not to see me, had past me by
To hunt and hawk elsewhere, save for the fate
Which hunted *him* when that un-Saxon blast,
And bolts of thunder moulded in high heaven
To serve the Norman purpose, drave and crack'd
His boat on Ponthieu beach; where our friend Guy
Had wrung his ransom from him by the rack,
But that I stept between and purchased him,
Translating his captivity from Guy
To mine own hearth at Bayeux, where he sits
My ransom'd prisoner.

Malet.

Well, if not with gold,
With golden deeds and iron strokes that brought
Thy war with Brittany to a goodlier close
Than else had been, he paid his ransom back.

William.

So that henceforth they are not like to league
With Harold against *me*.

Malet.

A marvel, how
He from the liquid sands of Cocsnon
Haled thy shore-swallow'd, armour'd Normans up
To fight for thee again!

William.

Perchance against
Their saver, save thou save him from himself.

Malet.

But I should let him home again, my lord.

William.

Simple! let fly the bird within the hand,
To catch the bird again within the bush!
No.
Smooth thou my way, before he clash with me;
I want his voice in England for the crown,
I want thy voice with him to bring him round;
And being brave he must be subtly cow'd,
And being truthful wrought upon to swear
Vows that he dare not break. England our own

Thro' Harold's help, he shall be my dear friend
As well as thine, and thou thyself shalt have
Large lordship there of lands and territory.

Malet.

I knew thy purpose; he and Wulfnoth never
Have met, except in public; shall they meet
In private? I have often talk'd with Wulfnoth,
And stuff'd the boy with fears, that these may act
On Harold when they meet.

William.

Then let them meet!

Malet.

I can but love this noble, honest Harold.

William.

Love him! why not? thine is a loving office,
I have commission'd thee to save the man:
Help the good ship, showing the sunken rock,
Or he is wreckt for ever.

Enter William Rufus.

William Rufus.

Father.

William.

Well, boy.

William Rufus.

They have taken away the toy thou gavest me,
The Norman knight.

William.

Why, boy?

William Rufus.

Because I broke
The horse's leg — it was mine own to break;
I like to have my toys, and break them too.

William.

Well, thou shalt have another Norman knight.

William Rufus.

And may I break his legs?

William.

Yea, — get thee gone!

William Rufus.

I 'll tell them I have had my way with thee.

[*Exit.*

Malet.

I never knew thee check thy will for aught
Save for the prattling of thy little ones.

William.

Who shall be kings of England. I am heir
Of England by the promise of her king.

Malet.

But there the great Assembly choose their king,
The choice of England is the voice of England.

William.

I will be king of England by the laws,
The choice, and voice of England.

Malet.

Can that be?

William.

The voice of any people is the sword
That guards them, or the sword that beats them down.
Here comes the would-be what I will be . . . kinglike . . .

Tho' scarce at ease; for, save our meshes break,
More kinglike he than like to prove a king.

(*Enter* Harold, *musing, with his eyes on the ground.*)

He sees me not — and yet he dreams of me.
Earl, wilt thou fly my falcons this fair day?
They are of the best, strong-wing'd against the wind.

Harold (*looking up suddenly, having caught but the last word*).

Which way does it blow?

William.

Blowing for England, ha?
Not yet. Thou hast not learnt thy quarters here.
The winds so cross and jostle among these towers.

Harold.

Count of the Normans, thou hast ransom'd us,
Maintain'd, and entertain'd us royally!

William.

And thou for us hast fought as loyally,
Which binds us friendship-fast for ever!

Harold.

Good!

But lest we turn the scale of courtesy
By too much pressure on it, I would fain,
Since thou hast promised Wulfnoth home with us,
Be home again with Wulfnoth.

William.

Stay — as yet
Thou hast but seen how Norman hands can strike,
But walk'd our Norman field, scarce touch'd or tasted
The splendours of our Court.

Harold.

I am in no mood:
I should be as the shadow of a cloud
Crossing your light.

William.

Nay, rest a week or two,
And we will fill thee full of Norman sun,
And send thee back among thine island mists
With laughter.

Harold.

Count, I thank thee, but had rather
Breathe the free wind from off our Saxon downs,
Tho' charged with all the wet of all the west.

William.

Why if thou wilt, so let it be — thou shalt.
That were a graceless hospitality
To chain the free guest to the banquet-board;
To-morrow we will ride with thee to Harfleur,
And see thee shipt, and pray in thy behalf
For happier homeward winds than that which crack'd
Thy bark at Ponthieu, — yet to us, in faith,
A happy one — whereby we came to know
Thy valour and thy value, noble earl.
Ay, and perchance a happy one for thee,
Provided — I will go with thee to-morrow —
Nay — but there be conditions, easy ones,
So thou, fair friend, will take them easily.

Enter Page.

Page.

My lord, there is a post from over seas
With news for thee. [*Exit* Page.

William.

Come, Malet, let us hear!

[*Exeunt* Count William *and* Malet.

Harold.

Conditions? What conditions? pay him back
His ransom? 'easy' — that were easy — nay —
No money-lover he! What said the king?
'I pray you do not go to Normandy.'
And fate hath blown me hither, bound me too
With bitter obligation to the Count —
Have I not fought it out? What did he mean?
There lodged a gleaming grimness in his eyes,
Gave his shorn smile the lie. The walls oppress me,
And yon huge keep that hinders half the heaven.
Free air! free field!

[*Moves to go out. A* Man-at-arms *follows him.*

Harold (*to the* Man-at-arms).

I need thee not. Why dost thou follow me?

Man-at-arms.

I have the Count's commands to follow thee.

HAROLD.

What then? Am I in danger in this court?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

I cannot tell. I have the Count's commands.

HAROLD.

Stand out of earshot then, and keep me still
In eyeshot.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Yea, lord Harold.

[*Withdraws.*

HAROLD.

And arm'd men
Ever keep watch beside my chamber door,
And if I walk within the lonely wood,
There is an arm'd man ever glides behind!

(*Enter* MALET.)

Why am I follow'd, haunted, harass'd, watch'd?
See yonder! [*Pointing to the* MAN-AT-ARMS.

MALET.

'T is the good Count's care for thee!
The Normans love thee not, nor thou the Normans,
Or — so they deem.

Harold.

But wherefore is the wind,
Which way soever the vane-arrow swing,
Not ever fair for England? Why, but now
He said (thou heardst him) that I must not hence
Save on conditions.

Malet.

So in truth he said.

Harold.

Malet, thy mother was an Englishwoman;
There somewhere beats an English pulse in thee!

Malet.

Well — for my mother's sake I love your England,
But for my father I love Normandy.

Harold.

Speak for thy mother's sake, and tell me true.

Malet.

Then for my mother's sake, and England's sake
That suffers in the daily want of thee,
Obey the Count's conditions, my good friend.

Harold.

How, Malet, if they be not honourable!

Malet.

Seem to obey them.

Harold.

Better die than lie!

Malet.

Choose therefore whether thou wilt have thy conscience
White as a maiden's hand, or whether England
Be shatter'd into fragments.

Harold.

News from England?

Malet.

Morcar and Edwin have stirr'd up the thanes
Against thy brother Tostig's governance;
And all the North of Humber is one storm.

Harold.

I should be there, Malet, I should be there!

Malet.

And Tostig in his own hall on suspicion
Hath massacred the thane that was his guest,
Gamel, the son of Orm: and there be more
As villainously slain.

Harold.

The wolf! the beast!
Ill news for guests, ha, Malet! More? What more?
What do they say? did Edward know of this?

Malet.

They say his wife was knowing and abetting.

Harold.

They say his wife! — To marry and have no husband
Makes the wife fool. My God, I should be there!
I 'll hack my way to the sea.

Malet.

Thou canst not, Harold;
Our duke is all between thee and the sea,

Our duke is all about thee like a God;
All passes block'd. Obey him, speak him fair,
For he is only debonair to those
That follow where he leads, but stark as death
To those that cross him. — Look thou, here is Wulfnoth!
I leave thee to thy talk with him alone;
How wan, poor lad! how sick and sad for home! [*Exit* Malet.

Harold (*muttering*).

Go not to Normandy — go not to Normandy!

(*Enter* Wulfnoth.)

Poor brother! still a hostage!

Wulfnoth.

Yea, and I
Shall see the dewy kiss of dawn no more
Make blush the maiden-white of our tall cliffs,
Nor mark the sea-bird rouse himself and hover
Above the windy ripple, and fill the sky
With free sea-laughter — never — save indeed

Thou canst make yield this iron-mooded duke
To let me go.

HAROLD.

Why, brother, so he will;
But on conditions. Canst thou guess at them?

WULFNOTH.

Draw nearer, — I was in the corridor,
I saw him coming with his brother Odo
The Bayeux bishop, and I hid myself.

HAROLD.

They did thee wrong who made thee hostage; thou
Wast ever fearful.

WULFNOTH.

And he spoke — I heard him —
'This Harold is not of the royal blood,
Can have no right to the crown;' and Odo said,
'Thine is the right, for thine the might; he is here,
And yonder is thy keep.'

HAROLD.

No, Wulfnoth, no!

Wulfnoth.

And William laugh'd and swore that might was right,
Far as he knew in this poor world of ours —
'Marry, the Saints must go along with us,
And, brother, we will find a way,' said he —
Yea, yea, he would be king of England.

Harold.

Never!

Wulfnoth.

Yea, but thou must not this way answer *him.*

Harold.

Is it not better still to speak the truth?

Wulfnoth.

Not here, or thou wilt never hence nor I:
For in the racing toward this golden goal
He turns not right or left, but tramples flat
Whatever thwarts him; hast thou never heard
His savagery at Alençon, — the town
Hung out raw hides along their walls, and cried,
'Work for the tanner.'

Harold.

That had anger'd *me*
Had I been William.

Wulfnoth.

Nay, but he had prisoners,
He tore their eyes out, sliced their hands away,
And flung them streaming o'er the battlements
Upon the heads of those who walk'd within —
Oh, speak him fair, Harold, for thine own sake!

Harold.

Your Welshman says, 'The Truth against the World,'
Much more the truth against myself.

Wulfnoth.

Thyself?
But for my sake, O brother! oh, for my sake!

Harold.

Poor Wulfnoth! do they not entreat thee well?

Wulfnoth.

I see the blackness of my dungeon loom
Across their lamps of revel, and beyond

The merriest murmurs of their banquet clank
The shackles that will bind me to the wall.

Harold.

Too fearful still!

Wulfnoth.

Oh, no, no — speak him fair!
Call it to temporize, and not to lie;
Harold, I do not counsel thee to lie.
The man that hath to foil a murderous aim
May, surely, play with words.

Harold.

Words are the man.
Not even for thy sake, brother, would I lie.

Wulfnoth.

Then for thine Edith?

Harold.

There thou prick'st me deep.

Wulfnoth.

And for our Mother England?

HAROLD.

Deeper still.

WULFNOTH.

And deeper still the deep-down oubliette,
Down thirty feet below the smiling day —
In blackness — dogs' food thrown upon thy head.
And over thee the suns arise and set,
And the lark sings, the sweet stars come and go,
And men are at their markets, in their fields,
And woo their loves and have forgotten thee;
And thou art upright in thy living grave,
Where there is barely room to shift thy side,
And all thine England hath forgotten thee;
And he our lazy-pious Norman King,
With all his Normans round him once again,
Counts his old beads, and hath forgotten thee.

HAROLD.

Thou art of my blood, and so methinks, my boy,
Thy fears infect me beyond reason. Peace!

WULFNOTH.

And then our fiery Tostig, while thy hands
Are palsied here, if his Northumbrians rise

And hurl him from them, — I have heard the Normans
Count upon this confusion — may he not make
A league with William, so to bring him back?

Harold.

That lies within the shadow of the chance.

Wulfnoth.

And like a river in flood thro' a burst dam
Descends the ruthless Norman — our good king
Kneels mumbling some old bone — our helpless folk
Are wash'd away, wailing, in their own blood —

Harold.

Wailing! not warring? Boy, thou hast forgotten
That thou art English.

Wulfnoth.

Then our modest women —
I know the Norman license — thine own Edith —

Harold.

No more! I will not hear thee — William comes.

Wulfnoth.

I dare not well be seen in talk with thee.
Make thou not mention that I spake with thee.
[*Moves away to the back of the stage.*

Enter William, Malet, *and* Officer.

Officer.

We have the man that rail'd against thy birth.

William.

Tear out his tongue.

Officer.

He shall not rail again.
He said that he should see confusion fall
On thee and on thine house.

William.

Tear out his eyes,
And plunge him into prison.

Officer.

It shall be done.
[*Exit* Officer.

William.

Look not amazed, fair earl! Better leave undone
Than do by halves — tongueless and eyeless, prison'd —

Harold.

Better methinks have slain the man at once!

William.

We have respect for man's immortal soul,
We seldom take man's life, except in war;
It frights the traitor more to maim and blind.

Harold.

In mine own land I should have scorn'd the man,
Or lash'd his rascal back, and let him go.

William.

And let him go? To slander thee again!
Yet in thine own land in thy father's day
They blinded my young kinsman, Alfred — ay,
Some said it was thy father's deed.

Harold.

They lied.

WILLIAM.

But thou and he — whom at thy word, for thou
Art known a speaker of the truth, I free
From this foul charge —

HAROLD.

Nay, nay, he freed himself
By oath and compurgation from the charge.
The king, the lords, the people clear'd him
of it.

WILLIAM.

But thou and he drove our good Normans out
From England, and this rankles in us yet.
Archbishop Robert hardly escaped with life.

HAROLD.

Archbishop Robert! Robert the Archbishop!
Robert of Jumièges, he that —

MALET.

Quiet! quiet!

HAROLD.

Count! if there sat within the Norman chair
A ruler all for England — one who fill'd

All offices, all bishopricks with English —
We could not move from Dover to the Humber
Saving thro' Norman bishopricks — I say
Ye would applaud that Norman who should drive
The stranger to the fiends!

William.

Why, that is reason!
Warrior thou art, and mighty wise withal!
Ay, ay, but many among our Norman lords
Hate thee for this, and press upon me — saying
God and the sea have given thee to our hands —
To plunge thee into lifelong prison here: —
Yet I hold out against them, as I may,
Yea — would hold out, yea, tho' they should revolt —
For thou hast done the battle in my cause;
I am thy fastest friend in Normandy.

Harold.

I am doubly bound to thee . . . if this be so.

William.

And I would bind thee more, and would myself
Be bounden to thee more.

Harold.

Then let me hence
With Wulfnoth to King Edward.

William.

So we will.
We hear he hath not long to live.

Harold.

It may be.

William.

Why then the heir of England, who is he?

Harold.

The Atheling is nearest to the throne.

William.

But sickly, slight, half-witted and a child,
Will England have him king?

Harold.

It may be, no.

William.

And hath King Edward not pronounced his heir?

Harold.

Not that I know.

William.

When he was here in Normandy,
He loved us and we him, because we found him
A Norman of the Normans.

Harold.

So did we.

William.

A gentle, gracious, pure and saintly man!
And grateful to the hand that shielded him,
He promised that if ever he were king
In England, he would give his kingly voice
To me as his successor. Knowest thou this?

Harold.

I learn it now.

William.

Thou knowest I am his cousin,
And that my wife descends from Alfred?

Harold.

Ay.

WILLIAM.

Who hath a better claim then to the crown
So that ye will not crown the Atheling?

HAROLD.

None that I know . . . if that but hung upon
King Edward's will.

WILLIAM.

Wilt *thou* uphold my claim?

MALET (*aside to* HAROLD).

Be careful of thine answer, my good friend.

WULFNOTH (*aside to* HAROLD).

O Harold, for my sake and for thine own!

HAROLD.

Ay . . . if the king have not revoked his promise.

WILLIAM.

But hath he done it then?

HAROLD.

Not that I know.

William.

Good, good, and thou wilt help me to the crown?

Harold.

Ay . . . if the Witan will consent to this.

William.

Thou art the mightiest voice in England, man,
Thy voice will lead the Witan — shall I have it?

Wulfnoth (*aside to* Harold).

O Harold, if thou love thine Edith, ay.

Harold.

Ay, if —

Malet (*aside to* Harold).

Thine 'ifs' will sear thine eyes out — ay.

William.

I ask thee, wilt thou help me to the crown?
And I will make thee my great earl of earls,
Foremost in England and in Normandy;
Thou shalt be verily king — all but the name —
For I shall most sojourn in Normandy;
And thou be my vice-king in England. Speak.

Wulfnoth (*aside to* Harold).

Ay, brother — for the sake of England — ay.

Harold.

My lord —

Malet (*aside to* Harold).

Take heed now.

Harold.

Ay.

William.

I am content,
For thou art truthful, and thy word thy bond.
To-morrow will we ride with thee to Harfleur.

[*Exit* William.

Malet.

Harold, I am thy friend, one life with thee,
And even as I should bless thee saving mine,
I thank thee now for having saved thyself.

[*Exit* Malet.

Harold.

For having lost myself to save myself,
Said 'ay' when I meant 'no,' lied like a lad
That dreads the pendent scourge, said 'ay' for 'no'!

Ay! No! — he hath not bound me by an oath —
Is 'ay' an oath? is 'ay' strong as an oath?
Or is it the same sin to break my word
As break mine oath? He call'd my word my bond!
He is a liar who knows I am a liar,
And makes believe that he believes my word —
The crime be on his head — not bounden — no.

[*Suddenly doors are flung open, discovering in an inner hall* Count William *in his state robes, seated upon his throne, between two* Bishops, Odo of Bayeux *being one: in the centre of the hall an ark covered with cloth of gold; and on either side of it the* Norman Barons.

Enter a Jailor *before* William's *throne.*

William (*to* Jailor).

Knave, hast thou let thy prisoner scape?

Jailor.

Sir Count,
He had but one foot, he must have hopt away,
Yea, some familiar spirit must have help'd him.

William.

Woe, knave, to thy familiar and to thee!
Give me thy keys. [*They fall clashing.*
Nay, let them lie. Stand there and wait my will. [*The* Jailor *stands aside.*

William (*to* Harold).

Hast thou such trustless jailors in thy North?

Harold.

We have few prisoners in mine earldom there,
So less chance for false keepers.

William.

We have heard
Of thy just, mild, and equal governance;
Honour to thee! thou art perfect in all honour!
Thy naked word thy bond! confirm it now
Before our gather'd Norman baronage,
For they will not believe thee — as I believe.
[*Descends from his throne and stands by the ark.*
Let all men here bear witness of our bond!
[*Beckons to* Harold, *who advances.*

(*Enter* Malet *behind him.*)

Lay thou thy hand upon this golden pall!
Behold the jewel of Saint Pancratius
Woven into the gold. Swear thou on this!

Harold.

What should I swear? Why should I swear on this?

William (*savagely*).

Swear thou to help me to the crown of England.

Malet (*whispering* Harold).

My friend, thou hast gone too far to palter now.

Wulfnoth (*whispering* Harold).

Swear thou to-day, to-morrow is thine own.

Harold.

I swear to help thee to the crown of England . . .
According as King Edward promises.

William.

Thou must swear absolutely, noble earl.

Malet (*whispering*).

Delay is death to thee, ruin to England.

Wulfnoth (*whispering*).

Swear, dearest brother, I beseech thee, swear!

Harold (*putting his hand on the jewel*).

I swear to help thee to the crown of England.

William.

Thanks, truthful earl; I did not doubt thy word,
But that my barons might believe thy word,
And that the Holy Saints of Normandy
When thou art home in England, with thine own,
Might strengthen thee in keeping of thy word,
I made thee swear. Show him by whom he hath sworn.

[*The two* Bishops *advance, and raise the cloth of gold. The bodies and bones of Saints are seen lying in the ark.*

The holy bones of all the Canonised
From all the holiest shrines in Normandy!

Harold.

Horrible! [*They let the cloth fall again.*

William.

Ay, for thou hast sworn an oath
Which, if not kept, would make the hard earth rive
To the very Devil's horns, the bright sky cleave
To the very feet of God, and send her hosts
Of injured Saints to scatter sparks of plague
Thro' all your cities, blast your infants, dash
The torch of war among your standing corn,
Dabble your hearths with your own blood. — Enough!
Thou wilt not break it! I, the count — the king —
Thy friend — am grateful for thine honest oath,
Not coming fiercely like a conqueror, now,
But softly as a bridegroom to his own.
For I shall rule according to your laws,
And make your ever-jarring earldoms move
To music and in order — Angle, Jute,

Dane, Saxon, Norman, help to build a throne
Out-towering hers of France. . . . The wind
is fair
For England now. . . . To-night we will be
merry.
To-morrow will I ride with thee to Harfleur.

[*Exeunt* WILLIAM *and all the* NORMAN BARONS, *etc.*

HAROLD.

To-night we will be merry — and to-morrow —
Juggler and bastard — bastard — he hates that
most —
William the tanner's bastard! Would he
heard me!
O God, that I were in some wide, waste field
With nothing but my battle-axe and him
To spatter his brains! Why, let earth rive,
gulf in
These cursed Normans — yea, and mine own
self!
Cleave heaven, and send thy saints that I may
say
Even to their faces, 'If ye side with William
Ye are not noble!' How their pointed fingers

Glared at me! Am I Harold, Harold, son
Of our great Godwin? Lo! I touch mine arms,
My limbs — they are not mine — they are a liar's —
I mean to be a liar — I am not bound —
Stigand shall give me absolution for it —
Did the chest move? did it move? I am utter craven!
O Wulfnoth, Wulfnoth, brother, thou hast betray'd me!

Wulfnoth.

Forgive me, brother, I will live here and die.

Enter Page.

Page.

My lord! the duke awaits thee at the banquet.

Harold.

Where they eat dead men's flesh, and drink their blood.

Page.

My lord —

Harold.

I know your Norman cookery is so spiced,
It masks all this.

Page.

My lord! thou art white as death.

Harold.

With looking on the dead. Am I so white?
Thy duke will seem the darker. Hence, I
follow. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — The King's Palace. London.

King Edward, *dying on a couch, and by him standing the* Queen, Harold, Archbishop Stigand, Gurth, Leofwin, Archbishop Aldred, Aldwyth, *and* Edith.

Stigand.

Sleeping or dying there? If this be death,
Then our great Council wait to crown thee king —
Come hither, I have a power;
[*To* Harold.
They call me near, for I am close to thee
And England — I, old shrivell'd Stigand, I,
Dry as an old wood-fungus on a dead tree,
I have a power!
See here this little key about my neck!
There lies a treasure buried down in Ely:
If e'er the Norman grow too hard for thee,

Ask me for this at thy most need, son Harold,
At thy most need — not sooner.

HAROLD.

So I will.

STIGAND.

Red gold — a hundred purses — yea, and more!
If thou canst make a wholesome use of these
To chink against the Norman, I do believe
My old crook'd spine would bud out two young wings
To fly to heaven straight with.

HAROLD.

Thank thee, father!
Thou art English, Edward too is English now,
He hath clean repented of his Normanism.

STIGAND.

Ay, as the libertine repents who cannot
Make done undone, when thro' his dying sense
Shrills, 'Lost thro' thee!' They have built their castles here;
Our priories are Norman; the Norman adder

Hath bitten us; we are poison'd: our dear England
Is demi-Norman. He! —
[*Pointing to* King Edward, *sleeping.*

Harold.

I would I were
As holy and as passionless as he!
That I might rest as calmly! Look at him —
The rosy face, and long down-silvering beard,
The brows unwrinkled as a summer mere. —

Stigand.

A summer mere with sudden wreckful gusts
From a side-gorge. Passionless? How he flamed
When Tostig's anger'd earldom flung him, nay,
He fain had calcined all Northumbria
To one black ash, but that thy patriot passion,
Siding with our great Council against Tostig,
Out-passion'd his! Holy? ay, ay, forsooth,
A conscience for his own soul, not his realm;
A twilight conscience lighted thro' a chink;
Thine by the sun; nay, by some sun to be,

When all the world hath learnt to speak the truth,
And lying were self-murder by that state
Which was the exception.

Harold.

That sun may God speed!

Stigand.

Come, Harold, shake the cloud off!

Harold.

Can I, father?
Our Tostig parted cursing me and England;
Our sister hates us for his banishment;
He hath gone to kindle Norway against England,
And Wulfnoth is alone in Normandy.
For when I rode with William down to Harfleur,
'Wulfnoth is sick,' he said; 'he cannot follow;'
Then with that friendly-fiendly smile of his,
'We have learnt to love him, let him a little longer
Remain a hostage for the loyalty

Of Godwin's house.' As far as touches Wulfnoth
I that so prized plain word and naked truth
Have sinn'd against it — all in vain.

Leofwin.

Good brother,
By all the truths that ever priest hath preach'd,
Of all the lies that ever men have lied,
Thine is the pardonablest.

Harold.

Maybe so!
I think it so, I think I am a fool
To think it can be otherwise than so.

Stigand.

Tut, tut, I have absolved thee: dost thou scorn me,
Because I had my Canterbury pallium
From one whom they dispoped?

Harold.

No, Stigand, no!

Stigand.

Is naked truth actable in true life?
I have heard a saying of thy father Godwin,

That, were a man of state nakedly true,
Men would but take him for the craftier liar.

Leofwin.

Be men less delicate than the Devil himself?
I thought that naked Truth would shame the
Devil,
The Devil is so modest.

Gurth.

He never said it!

Leofwin.

Be thou not stupid-honest, brother Gurth!

Harold.

Better to be a liar's dog, and hold
My master honest, than believe that lying
And ruling men are fatal twins that cannot
Move one without the other. Edward wakes! —
Dazed — he hath seen a vision.

Edward.

The green tree!
Then a great Angel past along the highest
Crying, 'The doom of England!' and at once

He stood beside me, in his grasp a sword
Of lightnings, wherewithal he cleft the tree
From off the bearing trunk, and hurl'd it from
him
Three fields away, and then he dash'd and
drench'd,
He dyed, he soak'd the trunk with human
blood,
And brought the sunder'd tree again, and set it
Straight on the trunk, that, thus baptized in
blood,
Grew ever high and higher, beyond my seeing,
And shot out sidelong boughs across the deep
That dropt themselves, and rooted in far isles
Beyond my seeing: and the great Angel rose
And past again along the highest, crying,
'The doom of England!' — Tostig, raise my
head! [*Falls back senseless.*

Harold (*raising him*).

Let Harold serve for Tostig!

Queen.

Harold served
Tostig so ill, he cannot serve for Tostig!

Ay, raise his head, for thou hast laid it low!
The sickness of our saintly king, for whom
My prayers go up as fast as my tears fall,
I well believe, hath mainly drawn itself
From lack of Tostig — thou hast banish'd him.

HAROLD.

Nay — but the Council, and the king himself.

QUEEN.

Thou hatest him, hatest him!

HAROLD (*coldly*).

Ay — Stigand, unriddle
This vision, canst thou?

STIGAND.

Dotage!

EDWARD (*starting up*).

It is finish'd.
I have built the Lord a house — the Lord hath dwelt
In darkness. I have built the Lord a house —
Palms, flowers, pomegranates, golden cherubim
With twenty-cubit wings from wall to wall —

I have built the Lord a house — sing, Asaph!
clash
The cymbal, Heman! blow the trumpet, priest!
Fall, cloud, and fill the house — lo! my two
pillars,
Jachin and Boaz! —
[*Seeing* Harold *and* Gurth.
Harold, Gurth, — where am I?
Where is the charter of our Westminster?

Stigand.

It lies beside thee, king, upon thy bed.

Edward.

Sign, sign at once — take, sign it, Stigand,
Aldred!
Sign it, my good son Harold, Gurth, and
Leofwin!
Sign it, my queen!

All.

We have sign'd it.

Edward.

It is finish'd!
The kingliest abbey in all Christian lands,

The lordliest, loftiest minster ever built
To Holy Peter in our English isle!
Let me be buried there, and all our kings,
And all our just and wise and holy men
That shall be born hereafter. It is finish'd!
Hast thou had absolution for thine oath?
[*To* HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Stigand hath given me absolution for it.

EDWARD.

Stigand is not canonical enough
To save thee from the wrath of Norman Saints.

STIGAND.

Norman enough! Be there no Saints of England
To help us from their brethren yonder?

EDWARD.

Prelate,
The Saints are one, but those of Normanland
Are mightier than our own. — Ask it of Aldred.
[*To* HAROLD.

Aldred.

It shall be granted him, my king; for he
Who vows a vow to strangle his own mother
Is guiltier keeping this than breaking it.

Edward.

O friends, I shall not overlive the day!

Stigand.

Why, then the throne is empty. Who inherits?
For tho' we be not bound by the king's voice
In making of a king, yet the king's voice
Is much toward his making. Who inherits?
Edgar the Atheling?

Edward.

No, no, but Harold.
I love him: he hath served me: none but he
Can rule all England. Yet the curse is on him
For swearing falsely by those blessed bones;
He did not mean to keep his vow.

Harold.

Not mean
To make our England Norman.

Edward.

There spake Godwin,
Who hated all the Normans; but their Saints
Have heard thee, Harold.

Edith.

Oh, my lord, my king!
He knew not whom he sware by.

Edward

Yea, I know
He knew not, but those heavenly ears have heard,
Their curse is on him; wilt thou bring another,
Edith, upon his head?

Edith.

No, no, not I!

Edward.

Why, then thou must not wed him.

Harold.

Wherefore, wherefore?

Edward.

O son, when thou didst tell me of thine oath,
I sorrow'd for my random promise given

To yon fox-lion. I did not dream then
I should be king. — My son, the Saints are
virgins;
They love the white rose of virginity,
The cold, white lily blowing in her cell:
I have been myself a virgin; and I sware
To consecrate my virgin here to heaven —
The silent, cloister'd, solitary life,
A life of lifelong prayer against the curse
That lies on thee and England.

Harold.

No, no, no!

Edward.

Treble denial of the tongue of flesh,
Like Peter's when he fell, and thou wilt have
To wail for it like Peter. O my son!
Are all oaths to be broken then, all promises
Made in our agony for help from Heaven?
Son, there is one who loves thee: and a wife,
What matters who, so she be serviceable
In all obedience, as mine own hath been?
God bless thee, wedded daughter!

[*Laying his hand on the* Queen's *head.*

QUEEN.

Bless thou too
That brother whom I love beyond the rest,
My banish'd Tostig.

EDWARD.

All the sweet Saints bless him!
Spare and forbear him, Harold, if he comes!
And let him pass unscathed; he loves me,
Harold!
Be kindly to the Normans left among us,
Who follow'd me for love! and dear son, swear
When thou art king, to see my solemn vow
Accomplish'd.

HAROLD.

Nay, dear lord, for I have sworn
Not to swear falsely twice.

EDWARD.

Thou wilt not swear?

HAROLD.

I cannot.

Edward.

Then on thee remains the curse,
Harold, if thou embrace her: and on thee,
Edith, if thou abide it, —

[*The* King *swoons;* Edith *falls and kneels by the couch.*

Stigand.

He hath swoon'd.
Death? . . . no, as yet a breath.

Harold.

Look up! look up!
Edith!

Aldred.

Confuse her not; she hath begun
Her lifelong prayer for thee.

Aldwyth.

O noble Harold,
I would thou couldst have sworn.

Harold.

For thine own pleasure?

Aldwyth.

No, but to please our dying king, and those
Who make thy good their own — all England, earl.

Aldred.

I would thou couldst have sworn. Our holy king
Hath given his virgin lamb to Holy Church
To save thee from the curse.

Harold.

Alas! poor man,
His promise brought it on me.

Aldred.

O good son!
That knowledge made him all the carefuller
To find a means whereby the curse might glance
From thee and England.

Harold.

Father, we so loved —

Aldred.

The more the love, the mightier is the prayer;
The more the love, the more acceptable

The sacrifice of both your loves to heaven.
No sacrifice to heaven, no help from heaven;
That runs thro' all the faiths of all the world.
And sacrifice there must be, for the king
Is holy, and hath talk'd with God, and seen
A shadowing horror; there are signs in heaven —

Harold.

Your comet came and went.

Aldred.

And signs on earth!
Knowest thou Senlac hill?

Harold.

I know all Sussex;
A good entrenchment for a perilous hour!

Aldred.

Pray God that come not suddenly! There is one
Who passing by that hill three nights ago —
He shook so that he scarce could out with it —
Heard, heard —

Harold.

The wind in his hair?

ALDRED.

A ghostly horn
Blowing continually, and faint battle-hymns,
And cries, and clashes, and the groans of men;
And dreadful shadows strove upon the hill,
And dreadful lights crept up from out the marsh —
Corpse-candles gliding over nameless graves —

HAROLD.

At Senlac?

ALDRED.

Senlac.

EDWARD (*waking*).

Senlac! Sanguelac,
The Lake of Blood!

STIGAND.

This lightning before death
Plays on the word, — and Normanizes too!

HAROLD.

Hush, father, hush!

Edward.

Thou uncanonical fool,
Wilt *thou* play with the thunder? North and South
Thunder together, showers of blood are blown
Before a never-ending blast, and hiss
Against the blaze they cannot quench — a lake,
A sea of blood — we are drown'd in blood — for God
Has fill'd the quiver, and Death has drawn the bow —
Sanguelac! Sanguelac! the arrow! the arrow!
[*Dies.*

Stigand.

It is the arrow of death in his own heart —
And our great Council wait to crown thee king.

SCENE II. — In the Garden. The King's House near London.

Edith.

Crown'd, crown'd and lost, crown'd king —
and lost to me!

(*Singing.*)

Two young lovers in winter weather,
None to guide them,
Walk'd at night on the misty heather;
Night, as black as a raven's feather;
Both were lost and found together,
None beside them.

That is the burthen of it — lost and found
Together in the cruel river Swale
A hundred years ago; and there's another,

Lost, lost, the light of day,

To which the lover answers lovingly:

'I am beside thee.'
Lost, lost, we have lost the way.
'Love, I will guide thee.'
Whither, O whither? into the river,
Where we two may be lost together,
And lost for ever? 'Oh, never! oh, never!
Tho' we be lost and be found together.'

Some think they loved within the pale forbidden
By Holy Church: but who shall say? the truth
Was lost in that fierce North, where *they* were lost,
Where all good things are lost, where Tostig lost
The good hearts of his people. It is Harold!

(*Enter* Harold.)

Harold the King!

Harold.

Call me not king, but Harold.

Edith.

Nay, thou art king!

Harold.

Thine, thine, or king or churl!
My girl, thou hast been weeping: turn not thou
Thy face away, but rather let me be
King of the moment to thee, and command
That kiss my due when subject, which will make

My kingship kinglier to me than to reign
King of the world without it.

Edith.

Ask me not,
Lest I should yield it, and the second curse
Descend upon thine head, and thou be only
King of the moment over England.

Harold.

Edith,
Tho' somewhat less a king to my true self
Than ere they crown'd me one, for I have lost
Somewhat of upright stature thro' mine oath,
Yet thee I would not lose, and sell not thou
Our living passion for a dead man's dream;
Stigand believed he knew not what he spake.
O God! I cannot help it, but at times
They seem to me too narrow, all the faiths
Of this grown world of ours, whose baby eye
Saw them sufficient. Fool and wise, I fear
This curse, and scorn it. But a little light! —
And on it falls the shadow of the priest;
Heaven yield us more! for better, Woden, all
Our cancell'd warrior-gods, our grim Walhalla,

Eternal war, than that the Saints at peace,
The Holiest of our Holiest One, should be
This William's fellow-tricksters; — better die
Than credit this, for death is death, or else
Lifts us beyond the lie. Kiss me — thou art not
A holy sister yet, my girl, to fear
There might be more than brother in my kiss,
And more than sister in thine own.

Edith.

I dare not.

Harold.

Scared by the church — 'Love for a whole life long.'
When was that sung?

Edith.

Here to the nightingales.

Harold.

Their anthems of no church, how sweet they are!
Nor kingly priest, nor priestly king to cross
Their billings ere they nest.

EDITH.

They are but of spring,
They fly the winter change — not so with us —
No wings to come and go.

HAROLD.

But wing'd souls flying
Beyond all change and in the eternal distance
To settle on the Truth.

EDITH.

They are not so true,
They change their mates.

HAROLD.

Do they? I did not know it.

EDITH.

They say thou art to wed the Lady Aldwyth.

HAROLD.

They say, they say!

EDITH.

If this be politic,
And well for thee and England — and for her —
Care not for me who love thee.

GURTH (*calling*).

Harold, Harold!

HAROLD.

The voice of Gurth! (*Enter* GURTH.) Good even,
my good brother!

GURTH.

Good even, gentle Edith.

EDITH.

Good even, Gurth.

GURTH.

Ill news hath come! Our hapless brother,
Tostig —
He, and the giant King of Norway, Harold
Hardrada — Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Orkney,
Are landed north of Humber, and in a field
So packt with carnage that the dykes and brooks
Were bridged and damm'd with dead, have
overthrown
Morcar and Edwin.

HAROLD.

Well then, we must fight.
How blows the wind?

GURTH.

Against Saint Valery
And William.

HAROLD.

Well then, we will to the North.

GURTH.

Ay, but worse news: this William sent to Rome,
Swearing thou swarest falsely by his Saints:
The Pope and that Archdeacon Hildebrand,
His master, heard him, and have sent him back
A holy gonfanon, and a blessed hair
Of Peter, and all France, all Burgundy,
Poitou, all Christendom is raised against thee;
He hath cursed thee, and all those who fight for
thee,
And given thy realm of England to the bastard.

HAROLD.

Ha! ha!

EDITH.

Oh, laugh not! . . . Strange and ghastly in the
gloom
And shadowing of this double thunder-cloud
That lours on England — laughter!

HAROLD.

No, not strange!
This was old human laughter in old Rome
Before a Pope was born, when that which reign'd
Call'd itself God. — A kindly rendering
Of 'Render unto Cæsar.' . . . The Good Shepherd!
Take this, and render that.

GURTH.

They have taken York.

HAROLD.

The Lord was God and came as man — the Pope
Is man and comes as God. — York taken?

GURTH.

Yea,
Tostig hath taken York!

HAROLD.

To York then. Edith,
Hadst thou been braver, I had better braved

All — but I love thee and thou me — and that
Remains beyond all chances and all churches,
And that thou knowest.

EDITH.

Ay, but take back thy ring.
It burns my hand — a curse to thee and me.
I dare not wear it.

[*Proffers* HAROLD *the ring, which he takes.*

HAROLD.

But I dare. God with thee!

[*Exeunt* HAROLD *and* GURTH.

EDITH.

The King hath cursed him, if he marry me;
The Pope hath cursed him, marry me or no!
God help me! I know nothing — can but pray
For Harold — pray, pray, pray — no help but prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world,
And touches Him that made it.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — In Northumbria.

Archbishop Aldred, Morcar, Edwin, *and* Forces. *Enter* Harold. *The standard of the golden Dragon of Wessex preceding him.*

Harold.

What! are thy people sullen from defeat?
Our Wessex dragon flies beyond the Humber,
No voice to greet it.

Edwin.

Let not our great king
Believe us sullen — only shamed to the quick
Before the king — as having been so bruised
By Harold, King of Norway; but our help
Is Harold, King of England. Pardon us, thou!
Our silence is our reverence for the king!

Harold.

Earl of the Mercians! if the truth be gall,
Cram me not thou with honey, when our good hive
Needs every sting to save it.

Voices.

Aldwyth! Aldwyth!

Harold.

Why cry thy people on thy sister's name?

Morcar.

She hath won upon our people thro' her beauty,
And pleasantness among them.

Voices.

Aldwyth, Aldwyth!

Harold.

They shout as they would have her for a queen.

Morcar.

She hath follow'd with our host, and suffer'd all.

Harold.

What would ye, men?

Voice.

Our old Northumbrian crown,
And kings of our own choosing.

Harold.

Your old crown
Were little help without our Saxon carles
Against Hardrada.

Voice.

Little! we are Danes,
Who conquer'd what we walk on, our own field.

Harold.

They have been plotting here!

[*Aside.*

Voice.

He calls us little!

Harold.

The kingdoms of this world began with little,
A hill, a fort, a city — that reach'd a hand
Down to the field beneath it, 'Be thou mine,'
Then to the next, 'Thou also!' If the field
Cried out, 'I am mine own,' another hill,
Or fort, or city, took it, and the first
Fell, and the next became an empire.

Voice.

Yet
Thou art but a West Saxon: *we* are Danes!

Harold.

My mother is a Dane, and I am English;
There is a pleasant fable in old books,

Ye take a stick, and break it; bind a score
All in one faggot, snap it over knee,
Ye cannot.

Voice.

Hear King Harold! he says true!

Harold.

Would ye be Norsemen?

Voices.

No!

Harold.

Or Norman?

Voices.

No!

Harold.

Snap not the faggot-band then.

Voice.

That is true!

Voice.

Ay, but thou art not kingly, only grandson
To Wulfnoth, a poor cowherd.

Harold.

This old Wulfnoth
Would take me on his knees and tell me tales

Of Alfred and of Athelstan the Great
Who drove you Danes; and yet he held that Dane,
Jute, Angle, Saxon, were or should be all
One England, for this cowherd, like my father,
Who shook the Norman scoundrels off the throne,
Had in him kingly thoughts — a king of men,
Not made but born, like the great King of all,
A light among the oxen.

VOICE.
That is true!

VOICE.
Ay, and I love him now, for mine own father
Was great, and cobbled.

VOICE.
Thou art Tostig's brother,
Who wastes the land.

HAROLD.
This brother comes to save
Your land from waste; I saved it once before,
For when your people banish'd Tostig hence,

And Edward would have sent a host against you,
Then I, who loved my brother, bade the king,
Who doted on him, sanction your decree
Of Tostig's banishment, and choice of Morcar,
To help the realm from scattering.

VOICE.

King! thy brother,
If one may dare to speak the truth, was wrong'd.
Wild was he, born so; but the plots against him
Had madden'd tamer men.

MORCAR.

Thou art one of those
Who brake into Lord Tostig's treasure-house
And slew two hundred of his following,
And now, when Tostig hath come back with power,
Are frighted back to Tostig.

OLD THANE.

Ugh! Plots and feuds!
This is my ninetieth birthday. Can ye not
Be brethren? Godwin still at feud with Alfgar,

And Alfgar hates King Harold. Plots and feuds!
This is my ninetieth birthday!

Harold.

Old man, Harold
Hates nothing; not *his* fault, if our two houses
Be less than brothers.

Voices.

Aldwyth, Harold, Aldwyth!

Harold.

Again! Morcar! Edwin! What do they mean?

Edwin.

So the good king would deign to lend an ear
Not overscornful, we might chance — perchance —
To guess their meaning.

Morcar.

Thine own meaning, Harold,
To make all England one, to close all feuds,
Mixing our bloods, that thence a king may rise

Half-Godwin and half-Alfgar, one to rule
All England beyond question, beyond quarrel.

Harold.

Who sow'd this fancy here among the people?

Morcar.

Who knows what sows itself among the people?
A goodly flower at times.

Harold.

The Queen of Wales?
Why, Morcar, it is all but duty in her
To hate me; I have heard she hates me.

Morcar.

No!
For I can swear to that, but cannot swear
That these will follow thee against the Norsemen,
If thou deny them this.

Harold.

Morcar and Edwin,
When will ye cease to plot against my house?

Edwin.

The king can scarcely dream that we, who know
His prowess in the mountains of the West,
Should care to plot against him in the North.

Morcar.

Who dares arraign us, king, of such a plot?

Harold.

Ye heard one witness even now.

Morcar.

The craven!
There is a faction risen again for Tostig,
Since Tostig came with Norway — fright, not love.

Harold.

Morcar and Edwin, will ye, if I yield,
Follow against the Norseman?

Morcar.

Surely, surely!

Harold.

Morcar and Edwin, will ye upon oath,
Help us against the Norman?

Morcar.

With good will;
Yea, take the Sacrament upon it, king.

Harold.

Where is thy sister?

MORCAR.

Somewhere hard at hand.
Call and she comes.

[*One goes out, then enter* ALDWYTH.

HAROLD.

I doubt not but thou knowest
Why thou art summon'd.

ALDWYTH.

Why? — I stay with these,
Lest thy fierce Tostig spy me out alone,
And flay me all alive.

HAROLD.

Canst thou love one
Who did discrown thine husband, unqueen thee?
Didst thou not love thine husband?

ALDWYTH.

Oh! my lord,
The nimble, wild, red, wiry, savage king —
That was, my lord, a match of policy.

HAROLD.

Was it?
I knew him brave: he loved his land: he fain

Had made her great: his finger on her harp
(I heard him more than once) had in it Wales,
Her floods, her woods, her hills: had I been his,
I had been all Welsh.

ALDWYTH.

Oh, ay! — all Welsh — and yet
I saw thee drive him up his hills — and women
Cling to the conquer'd, if they love, the more;
If not, they cannot hate the conqueror.
We never — O good Morcar, speak for us,
His conqueror conquer'd Aldwyth.

HAROLD.

Goodly news!

MORCAR.

Doubt it not thou! Since Griffyth's head was sent
To Edward, she hath said it.

HAROLD.

I had rather
She would have loved her husband. Aldwyth, Aldwyth,
Canst thou love me, thou knowing where I love?

ALDWYTH.

I can, my lord, for mine own sake, for thine,
For England, for thy poor white dove, who flutters
Between thee and the porch, but then would find
Her nest within the cloister and be still.

HAROLD.

Canst thou love one who cannot love again?

ALDWYTH.

Full hope have I that love will answer love.

HAROLD.

Then in the name of the great God, so be it!
Come, Aldred, join our hands before the hosts,
That all may see.

[ALDRED *joins the hands of* HAROLD *and* ALDWYTH, *and blesses them.*

VOICES.

Harold, Harold and Aldwyth!

HAROLD.

Set forth our golden Dragon, let him flap
The wings that beat down Wales!
Advance our Standard of the Warrior,

Dark among gems and gold; and thou, brave
banner,
Blaze like a night of fatal stars on those
Who read their doom and die.
Where lie the Norsemen? on the Derwent? ay,
At Stamford-Bridge.
Morcar, collect thy men; Edwin, my friend —
Thou lingerest. — Gurth, —
Last night King Edward came to me in dreams —
The rosy face and long down-silvering beard —
He told me I should conquer: —
I am no woman to put faith in dreams.
(*To his army.*)
Last night King Edward came to me in dreams,
And told me we should conquer.

Voices.

Forward! Forward!
Harold and Holy Cross!

Aldwyth.

The day is won!

SCENE II. — A Plain. Before the Battle of Stamford-Bridge.

Harold *and his* Guard.

Harold.

Who is it comes this way? Tostig? (*Enter* Tostig *with a small force.*) O brother,
What art thou doing here?

Tostig.

I am foraging
For Norway's army.

Harold.

I could take and slay thee.
Thou art in arms against us.

Tostig.

Take and slay me,
For Edward loved me.

Harold.

Edward bade me spare thee.

Tostig.

I hate King Edward, for he join'd with thee
To drive me outlaw'd. Take and slay me, I say,
Or I shall count thee fool.

Harold.

Take thee, or free thee,
Free thee or slay thee, Norway will have war;
No man would strike with Tostig, save for Norway.
Thou art nothing in thine England, save for Norway,
Who loves not thee, but war. What dost thou here,
Trampling thy mother's bosom into blood?

Tostig.

She hath wean'd me from it with such bitterness.
I come for mine own earldom, my Northumbria;
Thou hast given it to the enemy of our house.

Harold.

Northumbria threw thee off, she will not have thee;
Thou hast misused her: and, O crowning crime!
Hast murder'd thine own guest, the son of Orm,
Gamel, at thine own hearth.

TOSTIG.

The slow, fat fool!
He drawl'd and prated so, I smote him suddenly;
I knew not what I did. He held with Morcar. —
I hate myself for all things that I do.

HAROLD.

And Morcar holds with us. Come back with him.
Know what thou dost; and we may find for thee,
So thou be chasten'd by thy banishment,
Some easier earldom.

TOSTIG.

What for Norway then?
He looks for land among us, he and his.

HAROLD.

Seven feet of English land, or something more,
Seeing he is a giant.

TOSTIG.

That is noble!
That sounds of Godwin.

HAROLD.

Come thou back, and be
Once more a son of Godwin.

TOSTIG (*turns away*).

O brother, brother,
O Harold —

HAROLD (*laying his hand on* TOSTIG'S *shoulder*).

Nay then, come thou back to us!

TOSTIG (*after a pause turning to him*).

Never shall any man say that I, that Tostig
Conjured the mightier Harold from his North
To do the battle for me here in England,
Then left him for the meaner! thee! —
Thou hast no passion for the house of Godwin —
Thou hast but cared to make thyself a king —
Thou hast sold me for a cry. —
Thou gavest thy voice against me in the Council —
I hate thee, and despise thee, and defy thee.
Farewell for ever. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

On to Stamford-Bridge!

Scene III. — After the Battle of Stamford-Bridge. Banquet.

Harold *and* Aldwyth. Gurth, Leofwin, Morcar, Edwin, *and other* Earls *and* Thanes.

Voices.

Hail! Harold! Aldwyth! hail, bridegroom and bride!

Aldwyth (*talking with* Harold).

Answer them thou!
Is this our marriage-banquet? Would the wines
Of wedding had been dash'd into the cups
Of victory, and our marriage and thy glory
Been drunk together! these poor hands but sew,
Spin, broider — would that they were man's to have held
The battle-axe by thee!

Harold.

There *was* a moment
When, being forced aloof from all my guard,
And striking at Hardrada and his madmen,
I had wish'd for any weapon.

ALDWYTH.

Why art thou sad?

HAROLD.

I have lost the boy who play'd at ball with me,
With whom I fought another fight than this
Of Stamford-Bridge.

ALDWYTH.

Ay! ay! thy victories
Over our own poor Wales, when at thy side
He conquer'd with thee.

HAROLD.

No — the childish fist
That cannot strike again.

ALDWYTH.

Thou art too kindly.
Why didst thou let so many Norsemen hence?
Thy fierce forekings had clench'd their pirate hides
To the bleak church doors, like kites upon a barn.

HAROLD.

Is there so great a need to tell thee why?

ALDWYTH.

Yea, am I not thy wife?

VOICES.

Hail, Harold, Aldwyth!
Bridegroom and bride!

ALDWYTH.

Answer them! [*To* HAROLD.

HAROLD (*to all*).

Earls and thanes!
Full thanks for your fair greeting of my bride!
Earls, thanes, and all our countrymen! the day,
Our day beside the Derwent, will not shine
Less than a star among the goldenest hours
Of Alfred, or of Edward his great son,
Or Athelstan, or English Ironside
Who fought with Knut, or Knut who coming Dane
Died English. Every man about his king
Fought like a king; the king like his own man,
No better; one for all, and all for one,

One soul! and therefore have we shatter'd back
The hugest wave from Norseland ever yet
Surged on us, and our battle-axes broken
The Raven's wing, and dumb'd his carrion croak
From the gray sea for ever. Many are gone —
Drink to the dead who died for us, the living
Who fought and would have died, but happier lived,
If happier be to live; they both have life
In the large mouth of England, till *her* voice
Die with the world. Hail — hail!

Morcar.

May all invaders perish like Hardrada!
All traitors fail like Tostig!

[*All drink but* Harold.

Aldwyth.

Thy cup 's full!

Harold.

I saw the hand of Tostig cover it.
Our dear, dead traitor-brother, Tostig, him
Reverently we buried. Friends, had I been here,
Without too large self-lauding I must hold

The sequel had been other than his league
With Norway, and this battle. Peace be with him!
He was not of the worst. If there be those
At banquet in this hall, and hearing me —
For there be those, I fear, who prick'd the lion
To make him spring, that sight of Danish blood
Might serve an end not English — peace with them
Likewise, if *they* can be at peace with what
God gave us to divide us from the wolf!

ALDWYTH (*aside to* HAROLD).

Make not our Morcar sullen: it is not wise.

HAROLD.

Hail to the living who fought, the dead who fell!

VOICES.

Hail, hail!

FIRST THANE.

How ran that answer which King Harold gave
To his dead namesake, when he ask'd for England?

LEOFWIN.

'Seven feet of English earth, or something more,
Seeing he is a giant!'

First Thane.

Then for the bastard
Six feet and nothing more!

Leofwin.

Ay, but belike
Thou hast not learnt his measure.

First Thane.

By Saint Edmund
I over-measure him. Sound sleep to the man
Here by dead Norway without dream or dawn!

Second Thane.

What, is he bragging still that he will come,
To thrust our Harold's throne from under him?
My nurse would tell me of a molehill crying
To a mountain, 'Stand aside and room for me!'

First Thane.

Let him come! let him come! Here 's to him,
sink or swim! [*Drinks.*

Second Thane.

God sink him!

First Thane.

Cannot hands which had the strength
To shove that stranded iceberg off our shores,

And send the shatter'd North again to sea,
Scuttle his cockle-shell? What 's Brunanburg
To Stamford-Bridge? a war-crash, and so hard,
So loud, that, by Saint Dunstan, old Saint Thor —
By God, we thought him dead — but our old Thor
Heard his own thunder again, and woke and came
Among us again, and mark'd the sons of those
Who made this Britain England, break the North:

> Mark'd how the war-axe swang,
> Heard how the war-horn sang,
> Mark'd how the spear-head sprang,
> Heard how the shield-wall rang,
> Iron on iron clang,
> Anvil on hammer bang —

Second Thane.

Hammer on anvil, hammer on anvil. Old dog,
Thou art drunk, old dog!

First Thane.

Too drunk to fight with thee!

Second Thane.

Fight thou with thine own double, not with me,
Keep that for Norman William!

First Thane.

Down with William!

Third Thane.

The washerwoman's brat!

Fourth Thane.

The tanner's bastard!

Fifth Thane.

The Falaise byblow!

[*Enter a* Thane, *from Pevensey, spattered with mud.*

Harold.

Ay, but what late guest,
As haggard as a fast of forty days,
And caked and plaster'd with a hundred mires,
Hath stumbled on our cups?

Thane from Pevensey.

My lord the King!
William the Norman, for the wind had changed —

Harold.

I felt it in the middle of that fierce fight
At Stamford-Bridge. William hath landed, ha?

Thane from Pevensey.

Landed at Pevensey — I am from Pevensey —
Hath wasted all the land at Pevensey —
Hath harried mine own cattle — God confound
him!
I have ridden night and day from Pevensey —
A thousand ships — a hundred thousand men —
Thousands of horses, like as many lions
Neighing and roaring as they leapt to land —

Harold.

How oft in coming hast thou broken bread?

Thane from Pevensey.

Some thrice, or so.

Harold.

Bring not thy hollowness
On our full feast. Famine is fear, were it but
Of being starved. Sit down, sit down, and eat,
And, when again red-blooded, speak again;
(*Aside.*) The men that guarded England to the
South
Were scatter'd to the harvest. . . . No power
mine

To hold their force together. . . . Many are
fallen
At Stamford-Bridge . . . the people stupid-sure
Sleep like their swine . . . in South and North
at once
I could not be.
(*Aloud.*) Gurth, Leofwin, Morcar, Edwin!
(*Pointing to the revellers.*) The curse of Eng-
land! these are drown'd in wassail,
And cannot see the world but thro' their wines!
Leave them! and thee too, Aldwyth, must I
leave —
Harsh is the news! hard is our honeymoon!
Thy pardon. (*Turning round to his attendants.*)
Break the banquet up . . . Ye four!
And thou, my carrier-pigeon of black news,
Cram thy crop full, but come when thou art
call'd.

[*Exit* Harold.

ACT V.

SCENE I. — A Tent on a Mound, from which can be seen the Field of Senlac.

Harold, *sitting; by him standing* Hugh Margot *the* Monk, Gurth, Leofwin.

Harold.

Refer my cause, my crown to Rome! . . . The wolf
Mudded the brook and predetermined all.
Monk,
Thou hast said thy say, and had my constant 'No'
For all but instant battle. I hear no more.

Margot.

Hear me again — for the last time. Arise,
Scatter thy people home, descend the hill,
Lay hands of full allegiance in thy Lord's
And crave his mercy, for the Holy Father
Hath given this realm of England to the Norman.

HAROLD.

Then for the last time, monk, I ask again
When had the Lateran and the Holy Father
To do with England's choice of her own king?

MARGOT.

Earl, the first Christian Cæsar drew to the East
To leave the Pope dominion in the West.
He gave him all the kingdoms of the West.

HAROLD.

So! — did he? — Earl — I have a mind to play
The William with thine eyesight and thy tongue.
Earl — ay — thou art but a messenger of William.
I am weary — go: make me not wroth with thee!

MARGOT.

Mock-king, I am the messenger of God,
His Norman Daniel! Mene, Mene, Tekel!
Is thy wrath Hell, that I should spare to cry,
Yon heaven is wroth with *thee?* Hear me again!
Our Saints have moved the Church that moves the world,

And all the Heavens and very God: they heard —
They know King Edward's promise and thine — thine.

HAROLD.

Should they not know free England crowns herself?
Not know that he nor I had power to promise?
Not know that Edward cancell'd his own promise?
And for *my* part therein — Back to that juggler,
[*Rising.*
Tell him the Saints are nobler than he dreams,
Tell him that God is nobler than the Saints,
And tell him we stand arm'd on Senlac Hill,
And bide the doom of God.

MARGOT.

Hear it thro' me.
The realm for which thou art forsworn is cursed,
The babe enwomb'd and at the breast is cursed,
The corpse thou whelmest with thine earth is cursed,
The soul who fighteth on thy side is cursed,

The seed thou sowest in thy field is cursed,
The steer wherewith thou plowest thy field is cursed,
The fowl that fleeth o'er thy field is cursed,
And thou, usurper, liar —

HAROLD.

Out, beast monk!

[*Lifting his hand to strike him.* GURTH *stops the blow.*

I ever hated monks.

MARGOT.

I am but a voice
Among you: murder, martyr me if ye will —

HAROLD.

Thanks, Gurth! The simple, silent, selfless man
Is worth a world of tonguesters. (*To* MARGOT.)
Get thee gone!
He means the thing he says. See him out safe!

LEOFWIN.

He hath blown himself as red as fire with curses.
An honest fool! Follow me, honest fool,
But if thou blurt thy curse among our folk,

I know not — I may give that egg-bald head
The tap that silences.

Harold.

See him out safe.

[*Exeunt* Leofwin *and* Margot.

Gurth.

Thou hast lost thine even temper, brother Harold!

Harold.

Gurth, when I past by Waltham, my foundation
For men who serve the neighbour, not themselves,
I cast me down prone, praying; and, when I rose,
They told me that the Holy Rood had lean'd
And bow'd above me; whether that which held it
Had weaken'd, and the Rood itself were bound
To that necessity which binds us down;
Whether it bow'd at all but in their fancy;
Or if it bow'd, whether it symboll'd ruin
Or glory, who shall tell? but they were sad,
And somewhat sadden'd me.

GURTH.

Yet if a fear,
Or shadow of a fear, lest the strange Saints
By whom thou swarest should have power to balk
Thy puissance in this fight with him who made
And heard thee swear — brother — *I* have not sworn —
If the king fall, may not the kingdom fall?
But if I fall, I fall, and thou art king;
And if I win, I win, and thou art king;
Draw thou to London, there make strength to breast
Whatever chance, but leave this day to me.

LEOFWIN (*entering*).

And waste the land about thee as thou goest,
And be thy hand as winter on the field,
To leave the foe no forage.

HAROLD.

Noble Gurth!
Best son of Godwin! If I fall, I fall —
The doom of God! How should the people fight

When the king flies? And, Leofwin, art thou
mad?
How should the King of England waste the
fields
Of England, his own people? — No glance yet
Of the Northumbrian helmet on the heath?

Leofwin.

No, but a shoal of wives upon the heath,
And some one saw thy willy-nilly nun
Vying a tress against our golden fern.

Harold.

Vying a tear with our cold dews, a sigh
With these low-moaning heavens. Let her be
fetch'd.
We have parted from our wife without reproach,
Tho' we have pierced thro' all her practices;
And that is well.

Leofwin.

I saw her even now:
She hath not left us.

Harold.

Nought of Morcar then?

Gurth.

Nor seen, nor heard; thine, William's or his own
As wind blows, or tide flows: belike he watches,
If this war-storm in one of its rough rolls
Wash up that old crown of Northumberland.

Harold.

I married her for Morcar — a sin against
The truth of love. Evil for good, it seems,
Is oft as childless of the good as evil
For evil.

Leofwin.

Good for good hath borne at times
A bastard false as William.

Harold.

Ay, if Wisdom
Pair'd not with Good. But I am somewhat worn,
A snatch of sleep were like the peace of God.
Gurth, Leofwin, go once more about the hill —
What did the dead man call it — Sanguelac,
The lake of blood?

Leofwin.

A lake that dips in William
As well as Harold.

Harold.

Like enough. I have seen
The trenches dug, the palisades uprear'd
And wattled thick with ash and willow-wands;
Yea, wrought at them myself. Go round once more;
See all be sound and whole. No Norman horse
Can shatter England, standing shield by shield;
Tell that again to all.

Gurth.

I will, good brother.

Harold.

Our guardsman hath but toil'd his hand and foot,
I hand, foot, heart and head. Some wine! (*One pours wine into a goblet which he hands to* Harold.) Too much!
What? we must use our battle-axe to-day.
Our guardsmen have slept well, since we came in?

LEOFWIN.

Ay, slept and snored. Your second-sighted man
That scared the dying conscience of the king,
Misheard their snores for groans. They are up again
And chanting that old song of Brunanburg
Where England conquer'd.

HAROLD.

That is well. The Norman,
What is he doing?

LEOFWIN.

Praying for Normandy;
Our scouts have heard the tinkle of their bells.

HAROLD.

And our old songs are prayers for England too!
But by all Saints —

LEOFWIN.

Barring the Norman!

HAROLD.

Nay,
Were the great trumpet blowing doomsday dawn,

I needs must rest. Call when the Norman moves — [*Exeunt all but* HAROLD.

No horse — thousands of horses — our shield wall —

Wall — break it not — break not — break — [*Sleeps.*

VISION OF EDWARD.

Son Harold, I thy king, who came before
To tell thee thou shouldst win at Stamford-Bridge,
Come yet once more, from where I am at peace,
Because I loved thee in my mortal day,
To tell thee thou shalt die on Senlac Hill —
Sanguelac!

VISION OF WULFNOTH.

O brother, from my ghastly oubliette
I send my voice across the narrow seas —
No more, no more, dear brother, nevermore —
Sanguelac!

VISION OF TOSTIG.

O brother, most unbrotherlike to me,
Thou gavest thy voice against me in my life,
I give my voice against thee from the grave —
Sanguelac!

Vision of Norman Saints.

O hapless Harold! King but for an hour!
Thou swarest falsely by our blessed bones,
We give our voice against thee out of heaven!
Sanguelac! Sanguelac! The arrow! the arrow!

Harold (*starting up, battle-axe in hand*).

Away!
My battle-axe against your voices. Peace!
The king's last word — 'the arrow!' I shall die —
I die for England then, who lived for England —
What nobler? men must die.
I cannot fall into a falser world —
I have done no man wrong. Tostig, poor brother,
Art *thou* so anger'd?
Fain had I kept thine earldom in thy hands
Save for thy wild and violent will that wrench'd
All hearts of freemen from thee. I could do
No other than this way advise the king
Against the race of Godwin. Is it possible
That mortal men should bear their earthly heats
Into yon bloodless world, and threaten us thence
Unschool'd of Death? Thus then thou art re-
venged —

I left our England naked to the South
To meet thee in the North. The Norseman's raid
Hath helpt the Norman, and the race of Godwin
Hath ruin'd Godwin. No — our waking thoughts
Suffer a stormless shipwreck in the pools
Of sullen slumber, and arise again
Disjointed: only dreams — where mine own self
Takes part against myself! Why? for a spark
Of self-disdain born in me when I sware
Falsely to him, the falser Norman, over
His gilded ark of mummy-saints, by whom
I knew not that I sware, — not for myself —
For England — yet not wholly —

(*Enter* EDITH.)

Edith, Edith,
Get thou into thy cloister as the king
Will'd it: be safe: the perjury-mongering Count
Hath made too good an use of Holy Church
To break her close! There the great God of truth
Fill all thine hours with peace! — A lying devil
Hath haunted me — mine oath — my wife — I fain

Had made my marriage not a lie; I could not:
Thou art my bride! and thou in after years
Praying perchance for this poor soul of mine
In cold, white cells beneath an icy moon —
This memory to thee! — and this to England,
My legacy of war against the Pope
From child to child, from Pope to Pope, from age to age,
Till the sea wash her level with her shores,
Or till the Pope be Christ's.

Enter Aldwyth.

Aldwyth (*to* Edith).

Away from him!

Edith.

I will . . . I have not spoken to the king
One word; and one I must. Farewell!

[*Going.*

Harold.

Not yet.
Stay.

Edith.

To what use?

HAROLD.

The king commands thee, woman!

(*To* ALDWYTH.)

Have thy two brethren sent their forces in?

ALDWYTH.

Nay, I fear not.

HAROLD.

Then there 's no force in thee!
Thou didst possess thyself of Edward's ear
To part me from the woman that I loved!
Thou didst arouse the fierce Northumbrians!
Thou hast been false to England and to me! —
As . . . in some sort . . . I have been false to thee.
Leave me. No more — Pardon on both sides — Go!

ALDWYTH.

Alas, my lord, I loved thee.

HAROLD (*bitterly*).

With a love
Passing thy love for Griffyth! wherefore now
Obey my first and last commandment. Go!

ALDWYTH.

O Harold! husband! Shall we meet again?

HAROLD.

After the battle — after the battle. Go.

ALDWYTH.

I go. (*Aside.*) That I could stab her standing there! [*Exit* ALDWYTH.

EDITH.

Alas, my lord, she loved thee.

HAROLD.

Never! never!

EDITH.

I saw it in her eyes!

HAROLD.

I see it in thine.

And not on thee — nor England — fall God's doom!

EDITH.

On *thee?* on me. And thou art England! Alfred
Was England. Ethelred was nothing. England
Is but her king, and thou art Harold!

HAROLD.

Edith,
The sign in heaven — the sudden blast at sea —
My fatal oath — the dead Saints — the dark dreams —
The Pope's Anathema — the Holy Rood
That bow'd to me at Waltham — Edith, if
I, the last English King of England —

EDITH.

No,
First of a line that coming from the people,
And chosen by the people —

HAROLD.

And fighting for
And dying for the people —

EDITH.

Living! living!

HAROLD.

Yea so, good cheer! thou art Harold, I am Edith!
Look not thus wan!

EDITH.

What matters how I look?
Have we not broken Wales and Norseland?
slain,
Whose life was all one battle, incarnate war,
Their giant-king, a mightier man-in-arms
Than William.

HAROLD.

Ay, my girl, no tricks in him —
No bastard he! when all was lost, he yell'd,
And bit his shield, and dash'd it on the ground,
And swaying his two-handed sword about him,
Two deaths at every swing, ran in upon us
And died so, and I loved him as I hate
This liar who made me liar. If Hate can kill,
And Loathing wield a Saxon battle-axe —

EDITH.

Waste not thy might before the battle!

HAROLD.

No,
And thou must hence. Stigand will see thee
safe,
And so — Farewell.

[*He is going, but turns back.*

The ring thou darest not wear,
I have had it fashion'd, see, to meet my hand.

[HAROLD *shows the ring which is on his finger.*

Farewell!

[*He is going, but turns back again.*

I am dead as Death this day to aught of earth's
Save William's death or mine.

EDITH.

Thy death! — to-day!
Is it not thy birthday?

HAROLD.

Ay, that happy day!
A birthday welcome! happy days and many!
One — this! [*They embrace.*
Look, I will bear thy blessing into the battle
And front the doom of God.

Norman cries (heard in the distance).

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

Enter GURTH.

GURTH.

The Norman moves!

HAROLD.

Harold and Holy Cross!

[*Exeunt* HAROLD *and* GURTH.

Enter STIGAND.

STIGAND.

Our Church in arms — the lamb the lion — not
Spear into pruning-hook — the counter way —
Cowl, helm; and crozier, battle-axe. Abbot Alfwig,
Leofric, and all the monks of Peterboro'
Strike for the king; but I, old wretch, old Stigand,
With hands too limp to brandish iron — and yet
I have a power — would Harold ask me for it —
I have a power.

EDITH.

What power, holy father?

STIGAND.

Power now from Harold to command thee hence
And see thee safe from Senlac.

EDITH.

I remain!

STIGAND.

Yea, so will I, daughter, until I find
Which way the battle balance. I can see it
From where we stand: and, live or die, I would
I were among them!

CANONS *from Waltham (singing without).*

Salva patriam,
Sancte Pater,
Salva, Fili,
Salva, Spiritus,
Salva patriam,
Sancta Mater.[1]

EDITH.

Are those the blessed angels quiring, father?

STIGAND.

No, daughter, but the canons out of Waltham,
The king's foundation, that have follow'd him.

EDITH.

O God of battles, make their wall of shields
Firm as thy cliffs, strengthen their palisades!
What is that whirring sound?

[1] The *a* throughout these Latin hymns should be sounded broad, as in 'father.'

Stigand.

The Norman arrow!

Edith.

Look out upon the battle — is he safe?

Stigand.

The King of England stands between his banners.
He glitters on the crowning of the hill.
God save King Harold!

Edith.

— chosen by his people
And fighting for his people!

Stigand.

There is one
Come as Goliath came of yore — he flings
His brand in air and catches it again,
He is chanting some old war-song.

Edith.

And no David
To meet him?

Stigand.

Ay, there springs a Saxon on him,
Falls — and another falls.

EDITH.

Have mercy on us!

STIGAND.

Lo! our good Gurth hath smitten him to the death.

EDITH.

So perish all the enemies of Harold.

CANONS (*singing*).

Hostis in Angliam
Ruit prædator;
Illorum, Domine,
Scutum scindatur!
Hostis per Angliæ
Plagas bacchatur;
Casa crematur,
Pastor fugatur,
Grex trucidatur —

STIGAND.

Illos trucida, Domine.

EDITH.

Ay, good father.

CANONS (*singing*).

Illorum scelera
Pœna sequatur!

English Cries.

Harold and Holy Cross! Out! out!

Stigand.

Our javelins
Answer their arrows. All the Norman foot
Are storming up the hill. The range of knights
Sit, each a statue on his horse, and wait.

English Cries.

Harold and God Almighty!

Norman Cries.

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

Canons (*singing*).

Eques cum pedite
Præpediatur!
Illorum in lacrymas
Cruor fundatur!
Pereant, pereant,
Anglia precatur.

Stigand.

Look, daughter, look.

Edith.

Nay, father, look for *me!*

STIGAND.

Our axes lighten with a single flash
About the summit of the hill, and heads
And arms are sliver'd off and splinter'd by
Their lightning — and they fly — the Norman flies.

EDITH.

Stigand, O father, have we won the day?

STIGAND.

No, daughter, no — they fall behind the horse —
Their horse are thronging to the barricades;
I see the gonfanon of Holy Peter
Floating above their helmets — ha! he is down!

EDITH.

He down! Who down?

STIGAND.

The Norman Count is down.

EDITH.

So perish all the enemies of England!

STIGAND.

No, no, he hath risen again — he bares his face —

Shouts something — he points onward — all their horse
Swallow the hill locust-like, swarming up.

Edith.

O God of battles, make his battle-axe keen
As thine own sharp-dividing justice, heavy
As thine own bolts that fall on crimeful heads
Charged with the weight of heaven wherefrom they fall!

Canons (*singing*).

Jacta tonitrua,
Deus bellator!
Surgas e tenebris,
Sis vindicator!
Fulmina, fulmina,
Deus vastator!

Edith.

O God of battles, they are three to one,
Make thou one man as three to roll them down!

Canons (*singing*).

Equus cum equite
Dejiciatur!
Acies, acies
Prona sternatur!
Illorum lanceas
Frange, Creator!

STIGAND.

Yea, yea, for how their lances snap and shiver
Against the shifting blaze of Harold's axe!
War-woodman of old Woden, how he fells
The mortal copse of faces! There! And there!
The horse and horseman cannot meet the shield,
The blow that brains the horseman cleaves the horse,
The horse and horseman roll along the hill,
They fly once more, they fly, the Norman flies!

Equus cum equite
Præcipitatur.

EDITH.

O God, the God of truth hath heard my cry!
Follow them, follow them, drive them to the sea!

Illorum scelera
Pœna sequatur!

STIGAND.

Truth! no; a lie; a trick, a Norman trick!
They turn on the pursuer, horse against foot,
They murder all that follow.

Edith.

Have mercy on us!

Stigand.

Hot-headed fools — to burst the wall of shields!
They have broken the commandment of the king!

Edith.

His oath was broken — O holy Norman Saints,
Ye that are now of heaven, and see beyond
Your Norman shrines, pardon it, pardon it,
That he forsware himself for all he loved,
Me, me and all! Look out upon the battle!

Stigand.

They thunder again upon the barricades.
My sight is eagle, but the strife so thick —
This is the hottest of it: hold, ash! hold, willow!

English Cries.

Out, out!

Norman Cries.

Ha Rou!

Stigand.

Ha! Gurth had leapt upon him
And slain him: he hath fallen.

Edith.

And I am heard.
Glory to God in the Highest! fallen, fallen!

Stigand.

No, no, his horse — he mounts another — wields
His war-club, dashes it on Gurth, and Gurth,
Our noble Gurth, is down!

Edith.

Have mercy on us!

Stigand.

And Leofwin is down!

Edith.

Have mercy on us!
O Thou that knowest, let not my strong prayer
Be weaken'd in thy sight, because I love
The husband of another!

Norman Cries.

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

Edith.

I do not hear our English war-cry.

Stigand.

No.

Edith.

Look out upon the battle — is he safe?

Stigand.

He stands between the banners with the dead
So piled about him he can hardly move.

Edith (*takes up the war-cry*).

Out! out!

Norman Cries.

Ha Rou!

Edith (*cries out*).

Harold and Holy Cross!

Norman Cries.

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

Edith.

What is that whirring sound?

Stigand.

The Norman sends his arrows up to heaven,
They fall on those within the palisade!

Edith.

Look out upon the hill — is Harold there?

Stigand.

Sanguelac — Sanguelac — the arrow — the arrow!
— away!

Scene II. — Field of the Dead. Night.

Aldwyth *and* Edith.

Aldwyth.

O Edith, art thou here? O Harold, Harold —
Our Harold — we shall never see him more.

Edith.

For there was more than sister in my kiss,
And so the saints were wroth. I cannot love
them,
For they are Norman saints — and yet I should —
They are so much holier than their harlot's son
With whom they play'd their game against the
king!

Aldwyth.

The king is slain, the kingdom overthrown!

Edith.

No matter!

Aldwyth.

How no matter, Harold slain? —
I cannot find his body. Oh, help me thou!
O Edith, if I ever wrought against thee,
Forgive me thou, and help me here!

Edith.

No matter!

Aldwyth.

Not help me, nor forgive me?

Edith.

So thou saidest.

Aldwyth.

I say it now, forgive me!

Edith.

Cross me not!
I am seeking one who wedded me in secret.
Whisper! God's angels only know it. Ha!
What art *thou* doing here among the dead?
They are stripping the dead bodies naked yonder,
And thou art come to rob them of their rings!

ALDWYTH.

O Edith, Edith, I have lost both crown
And husband.

EDITH.

So have I.

ALDWYTH.

I tell thee, girl,
I am seeking my dead Harold.

EDITH.

And I mine!
The Holy Father strangled him with a hair
Of Peter, and his brother Tostig helpt;
The wicked sister clapt her hands and laugh'd;
Then all the dead fell on him.

ALDWYTH.

Edith, Edith —

EDITH.

What was he like, this husband? like to thee?
Call not for help from me. I knew him not.
He lies not here; not close beside the standard.
Here fell the truest, manliest hearts of England.
Go further hence and find him.

ALDWYTH.

She is crazed!

EDITH.

That doth not matter either. Lower the light.
He must be here.

Enter two CANONS, OSGOD *and* ATHELRIC, *with torches. They turn over the dead bodies and examine them as they pass.*

OSGOD.

I think that this is Thurkill.

ATHELRIC.

More likely Godric.

OSGOD.

I am sure this body
Is Alfwig, the king's uncle.

ATHELRIC.

So it is!
No, no — brave Gurth, one gash from brow to knee!

OSGOD.

And here is Leofwin.

"*And here is He.*"

HAROLD.

Etched from painting by Sohommer.

EDITH.

And here is *He!*

ALDWYTH.

Harold? Oh, no — nay, if it were — my God,
They have so maim'd and murder'd all his face
There is no man can swear to him!

EDITH.

But one woman!
Look you, we never mean to part again.
I have found him, I am happy.
Was there not some one ask'd me for forgiveness?
I yield it freely, being the true wife
Of this dead King, who never bore revenge.

Enter COUNT WILLIAM *and* WILLIAM MALET.

WILLIAM.

Who be these women? And what body is this?

EDITH.

Harold, thy better!

WILLIAM.

Ay, and what art thou?

EDITH.

His wife!

MALET.

Not true, my girl, here is the Queen!

[*Pointing out* ALDWYTH.

WILLIAM (*to* ALDWYTH).

Wast thou his Queen?

ALDWYTH.

I was the Queen of Wales.

WILLIAM.

Why, then of England. Madam, fear us not.

(*To* MALET.)

Knowest thou this other?

MALET.

When I visited England,
Some held she was his wife in secret — some —
Well — some believed she was his paramour.

EDITH.

Norman, thou liest! liars all of you,
Your Saints and all! *I* am his wife! and she —
For look, our marriage ring!

[*She draws it off the finger of* HAROLD.

I lost it somehow —
I lost it, playing with it when I was wild.
That bred the doubt! but I am wiser now . . .
I am too wise . . . Will none among you all
Bear me true witness — only for this once —
That I have found it here again?

[*She puts it on.*

And thou,
Thy wife am I for ever and evermore.

[*Falls on the body and dies.*

William.

Death! — and enough of death for this one day,
The day of Saint Calixtus, and the day,
My day when I was born.

Malet.

And this dead king's,
Who, king or not, hath kinglike fought and fallen,
His birthday, too. It seems but yestereven
I held it with him in his English halls,
His day, with all his roof-tree ringing 'Harold,'
Before he fell into the snare of Guy;

When all men counted Harold would be king,
And Harold was most happy.

William.

Thou art half English.

Take them away!
Malet, I vow to build a church to God
Here on the hill of battle; let our high altar
Stand where their standard fell . . . where these two lie.
Take them away, I do not love to see them.
Pluck the dead woman off the dead man, Malet!

Malet.

Faster than ivy! Must I hack her arms off?
How shall I part them?

William.

Leave them. Let them be!
Bury him and his paramour together.
He that was false in oath to me, it seems
Was false to his own wife. We will not give him
A Christian burial: yet he was a warrior,
And wise, yea truthful, till that blighted vow

Which God avenged to-day.
Wrap them together in a purple cloak,
And lay them both upon the waste sea-shore
At Hastings, there to guard the land for which
He did forswear himself — a warrior — ay,
And but that Holy Peter fought for us,
And that the false Northumbrian held aloof,
And save for that chance arrow which the Saints
Sharpen'd and sent against him — who can tell? —
Three horses had I slain beneath me; twice
I thought that all was lost. Since I knew battle,
And that was from my boyhood, never yet —
No, by the splendour of God — have I fought men
Like Harold and his brethren, and his guard
Of English. Every man about his king
Fell where he stood. They loved him: and, pray God
My Normans may but move as true with me
To the door of death! Of one self-stock at first,
Make them again one people — Norman, English,
And English, Norman; we should have a hand

To grasp the world with, and a foot to stamp
it . . .

Flat. Praise the Saints! It is over. No more
blood!

I am King of England, so they thwart me not,
And I will rule according to their laws.

(*To* Aldwyth.) Madam, we will entreat thee
with all honour.

Aldwyth.

My punishment is more than I can bear.

THE FALCON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Count Federigo degli Alberighi.

Filippo, *the Count's foster-brother.*

The Lady Giovanna.

Elisabetta, *the Count's nurse.*

"Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her?"

THE FALCON.

Photogravure from painting by F. T. Merrill.

THE FALCON.

SCENE. — An Italian Cottage. Castle and Mountains seen through Window.

Elisabetta *discovered seated on stool in window, darning. The Count with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.*

Elisabetta.

So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

Count.

Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her?
My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor,
My far-eyed queen of the winds — thou that canst soar

Beyond the morning lark, and, howsoe'er
Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon
him
Eagle-like, lightning-like — strike, make his
feathers
Glance in mid heaven. [*Crosses to chair.*
I would thou hadst a mate!
Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me;
I am as lone and loveless as thyself.
[*Sits in chair.*
Giovanna here! Ay, ruffle thyself — *be* jealous!
Thou shouldst be jealous of her. Tho' I bred
thee
The full-train'd marvel of all falconry,
And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna
Be here again — No, no! Buss me, my bird!
The stately widow has no heart for me.
Thou art the last friend left me upon earth —
No, no again to that! [*Rises and turns.*
My good old nurse,
I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

ELISABETTA.

Ay, and forgotten thy foster-brother too.

COUNT.

Bird-babble for my falcon! Let it pass.
What art thou doing there?

ELISABETTA.

Darning, your lordship.
We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now:
Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces
To please our lady, we must darn, my lord.
This old thing here (*points to necklace round her neck*), they are but blue beads — my Piero,
God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me,
Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him.
How couldst thou do it, my son? How couldst thou do it?

COUNT.

She saw it at a dance, upon a neck
Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

ELISABETTA.

She told thee as much?

COUNT.

No, no — a friend of hers.

ELISABETTA.

Shame on her that she took it at thy hands,
She rich enough to have bought it for herself!

COUNT.

She would have robb'd me then of a great pleasure.

ELISABETTA.

But hath she yet return'd thy love?

COUNT.

Not yet!

ELISABETTA.

She should return thy necklace then.

COUNT.

Ay, if
She knew the giver; but I bound the seller
To silence, and I left it privily
At Florence, in her palace.

ELISABETTA.

And sold thine own
To buy it for her. She not know? She knows
There 's none such other —

COUNT.

Madman anywhere.
Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad
Will hardly help to make him sane again.

Enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO.

Ah, the women, the women! Ah, Monna Giovanna, you here again! you that have the face of an angel and the heart of a — that 's too positive! You that have a score of lovers and have not a heart for any of them — that 's positive-negative: you that have *not* the head of a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it — that 's too negative; you that have a cheek like a peach and a heart like the stone in it — that 's positive again — that 's better!

ELISABETTA.

Sh — sh — Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turns half round*).

Here has our master been a-glorifying and a-velveting and a-silking himself, and a-peacocking and a-spreading to catch her eye for a dozen year, till he has n't an eye left in his own tail to flourish among the peahens, and all along o' you, Monna Giovanna, all along o' you!

ELISABETTA.

Sh — sh — Filippo! Can't you hear that you are saying behind his back what you see you are saying afore his face?

COUNT.

Let him — he never spares me to my face!

FILIPPO.

No, my lord, I never spare your lordship to your lordship's face, nor behind your lordship's back, nor to right, nor to left, nor to round about and back to your lordship's face again, for I 'm honest, your lordship.

COUNT.

Come, come, Filippo, what is there in the larder?

[ELISABETTA *crosses to fireplace and puts on wood.*

FILIPPO.

Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks.

COUNT.

No bread?

FILIPPO.

Half a breakfast for a rat!

COUNT.

Milk?

FILIPPO.

Three laps for a cat!

COUNT.

Cheese?

FILIPPO.

A supper for twelve mites.

COUNT.

Eggs?

FILIPPO.

One, but addled.

COUNT.

No bird?

FILIPPO.

Half a tit and a hern's bill.

COUNT.

Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man! Anything or nothing?

FILIPPO.

Well, my lord, if all-but-nothing be anything, and one plate of dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then there is anything in your lordship's larder

at your lordship's service, if your lordship care to call for it.

COUNT.

Good mother, happy was the prodigal son,
For he return'd to the rich father; I
But add my poverty to thine. And all
Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee make
Thy slender meal out of those scraps and shreds
Filippo spoke of. As for him and me,
There sprouts a salad in the garden still.
(*To the Falcon.*) Why didst thou miss thy quarry yester-even?
To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us down
Our dinner from the skies. Away, Filippo!

[*Exit, followed by* FILIPPO.

ELISABETTA.

I knew it would come to this. She has beggared him. I always knew it would come to this! (*Goes up to table as if to resume darning, and looks out of window.*) Why, as I live, there is Monna Giovanna coming down the hill from the castle. Stops and stares at our cottage. Ay, ay! stare at it: it's all you have left us.

Shame on you! *She* beautiful: sleek as a miller's mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but beautiful — bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this — I always knew it must come to this! (*Goes up to door during latter part of speech, and opens it.*) Come in, Madonna, come in. (*Retires to front of table and curtseys as the* LADY GIOVANNA *enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.*) Nay, let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[LADY GIOVANNA *moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Can I speak with the Count?

ELISABETTA.

Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and

make her happy? for I 've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly — which is more than I did, my lady, more than I did — and he so handsome — and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self — and better late than never — but come when they will — then or now — it 's all for the best, come when they will — they are made by the blessed saints — these marriages.

[*Raises her hands.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Marriages? I shall never marry again!

ELISABETTA (*rises and turns*).

Shame on her then!

"O sweet saints! one plate of prunes!"

THE FALCON.

Photogravure from painting by W. L. Taylor.

W.L. TAYLOR.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Where is the Count?

ELISABETTA.

Just gone
To fly his falcon.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Call him back and say
I come to breakfast with him.

ELISABETTA.

Holy mother!
To breakfast! O sweet saints! one plate of prunes!
Well, Madam, I will give your message to him.
[*Exit.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

His falcon, and I come to ask for his falcon,
The pleasure of his eyes — boast of his hand —
Pride of his heart — the solace of his hours —
His one companion here — nay, I have heard
That, thro' his late magnificence of living
And this last costly gift to mine own self,
[*Shows diamond necklace.*

He hath become so beggar'd that his falcon
Even wins his dinner for him in the field.
That must be talk, not truth, but, truth or talk,
How can I ask for his falcon?

[*Rises and moves as she speaks.*

O my sick boy!
My daily fading Florio, it is thou
Hath set me this hard task, for when I say,
What can I do — what can I get for thee?
He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his falcon,
And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask,
He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me!
Will he not pray me to return his love —
To marry him? — (*pause*) — I can never marry him.
His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl
At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there.
The feud between our houses is the bar
I cannot cross; I dare not brave my brother,
Break with my kin. My brother hates him, scorns
The noblest-natured man alive, and I —
Who have that reverence for him that I scarce

Dare beg him to receive his diamonds back —
How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon?
[*Puts diamonds in her casket.*

Re-enter COUNT *and* FILIPPO. COUNT *turns to* FILIPPO.

COUNT.

Do what I said; I cannot do it myself.

FILIPPO.

Why then, my lord, we are pauper'd out and out.

COUNT.

Do what I said! [*Advances and bows low.*
Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear lady.

LADY GIOVANNA.

And welcome turns a cottage to a palace.

COUNT.

'T is long since we have met!

LADY GIOVANNA.

To make amends
I come this day to break my fast with you.

COUNT.

I am much honour'd — yes —

[*Turns to* FILIPPO.

Do what I told thee. Must I do it myself?

FILIPPO.

I will, I will. (*Sighs.*) Poor fellow! [*Exit.*

COUNT.

Lady, you bring your light into my cottage
Who never deign'd to shine into my palace.
My palace wanting you was but a cottage;
My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

LADY GIOVANNA.

In cottage or in palace, being still
Beyond your fortunes, you are still the king
Of courtesy and liberality.

COUNT.

I trust I still maintain my courtesy;
My liberality perforce is dead
Thro' lack of means of giving.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yet I come
To ask a gift. [*Moves toward him a little.*

COUNT.

It will be hard, I fear,
To find one shock upon the field when all
The harvest has been carried.

LADY GIOVANNA.

But my boy —
(*Aside.*) No, no! not yet — I cannot!

COUNT.

Ay, how is he,
That bright inheritor of your eyes — your boy?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Alas, my Lord Federigo, he hath fallen
Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

COUNT.

Sick! is it so? why, when he came last year
To see me hawking, he was well enough:
And then I taught him all our hawking-phrases.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Oh yes, and once you let him fly your falcon.

COUNT.

How charm'd he was! what wonder? — A gallant boy,
A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

LADY GIOVANNA (*sinks in chair*).

What do you rate her at?

COUNT.

My bird? a hundred
Gold pieces once were offer'd by the Duke.
I had no heart to part with her for money.

LADY GIOVANNA.

No, not for money.

[COUNT *turns away and sighs.*

Wherefore do you sigh?

COUNT.

I have lost a friend of late.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I could sigh with you
For fear of losing more than friend, a son;
And if he leave me — all the rest of life —
That wither'd wreath were of more worth to me.

[*Looking at wreath on wall.*

COUNT.

That wither'd wreath is of more worth to me
Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this
New-wakening year.

[*Goes and takes down wreath.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

And yet I never saw
The land so rich in blossom as this year.

COUNT (*holding wreath toward her*).

Was not the year when this was gather'd richer?

LADY GIOVANNA.

How long ago was that?

COUNT.

Alas, ten summers!
A lady that was beautiful as day
Sat by me at a rustic festival
With other beauties on a mountain meadow,
And she was the most beautiful of all;
Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful.
The mountain flowers grew thickly round about.
I made a wreath with some of these; I ask'd
A ribbon from her hair to bind it with;
I whisper'd, Let me crown you Queen of Beauty,
And softly placed the chaplet on her head.
A colour, which has colour'd all my life,
Flush'd in her face; then I was call'd away;
And presently all rose, and so departed.

Ah! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass,
And there I found it.

[*Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*after pause*).

How long since do you say?

COUNT.

That was the very year before you married.

LADY GIOVANNA.

When I was married you were at the wars.

COUNT.

Had she not thrown my chaplet on the grass,
It may be I had never seen the wars.

[*Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Ah, but, my lord, there ran a rumour then
That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you
True tears that year were shed for you in Florence.

COUNT.

It might have been as well for me. Unhappily

I was but wounded by the enemy there
And then imprison'd.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Happily, however,
I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

COUNT.

No, no, not quite, Madonna, not yet, not yet.

Re-enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO.

My lord, a word with you.

COUNT.

Pray, pardon me!

[LADY GIOVANNA *crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.*

COUNT (*to* FILIPPO).

What is it, Filippo?

FILIPPO.

Spoons, your lordship.

COUNT.

Spoons!

FILIPPO.

Yes, my lord, for was n't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we have n't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

COUNT.

Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

FILIPPO.

Half o' one, my lord!

COUNT.

How half of one?

FILIPPO.

I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

COUNT.

And the other nine?

FILIPPO.

Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer

with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

COUNT.

Why — no, man. Only see your cloth be clean. [*Exit* FILIPPO.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Ay, ay, this faded ribbon was the mode
In Florence ten years back. What 's here? a scroll
Pinned to the wreath.
My lord, you have said so much
Of this poor wreath that I was bold enough
To take it down, if but to guess what flowers
Had made it; and I find a written scroll
That seems to run in rhymings. Might I read?

COUNT.

Ay, if you will.

LADY GIOVANNA.

It should be if you can.
(Reads.) 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for who could trace a hand
So wild and staggering?

COUNT.

This was penn'd, Madonna,
Close to the grating on a winter morn
In the perpetual twilight of a prison,
When he that made it, having his right hand
Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his left.

LADY GIOVANNA.

O heavens! the very letters seem to shake
With cold, with pain perhaps, poor prisoner!
Well,
Tell me the words — or better — for I see
There goes a musical score along with them,
Repeat them to their music.

COUNT.

You can touch
No chord in me that would not answer you
In music.

LADY GIOVANNA.

That is musically said.

[COUNT *takes guitar.* LADY GIOVANNA *sits listening with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll and places it on table at the end of the song.*

"You can touch
No chord in me that would not answer you
In music."

THE FALCON.

Mezzotint by G. W. H. Ritchie from painting by Percy Moran.

COUNT (*sings, playing guitar*).

'Dead mountain flowers, dead mountain-meadow flowers,
Dearer than when you made your mountain gay,
Sweeter than any violet of to-day,
Richer than all the wide world-wealth of May,
To me, tho' all your bloom has died away,
You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow flowers.'

Enter ELISABETTA *with cloth.*

ELISABETTA.

A word with you, my lord!

COUNT (*singing*).

'O mountain flowers!'

ELISABETTA (*louder*).

A word, my lord!

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead flowers!'

ELISABETTA (*louder*).

A word, my lord!

COUNT.

I pray you pardon me again!

[LADY GIOVANNA *looking at wreath.*

COUNT (*to* ELISABETTA).

What is it?

ELISABETTA.

My lord, we have but one piece of earthenware to serve the salad in to my lady, and that cracked!

COUNT.

Why then, that flower'd bowl my ancestor
Fetch'd from the farthest east — we never use it
For fear of breakage — but this day has brought
A great occasion. You can take it, nurse!

ELISABETTA.

I did take it, my lord, but what with my lady's coming that had so flurried me, and what with the fear of breaking it, I did break it, my lord: it is broken!

COUNT.

My one thing left of value in the world!
No matter! see your cloth be white as snow!

ELISABETTA (*pointing thro' window*).

White? I warrant thee, my son, as the snow yonder on the very tip-top o' the mountain.

COUNT.

And yet, to speak white truth, my good old mother,
I have seen it like the snow on the moraine.

ELISABETTA.

How can your lordship say so? There, my lord! [*Lays cloth.*
O my dear son, be not unkind to me.
And one word more. [*Going — returns.*

COUNT (*touching guitar*).

Good! let it be but one.

ELISABETTA.

Hath she return'd thy love?

COUNT.

Not yet!

ELISABETTA.

And will she?

COUNT (*looking at* LADY GIOVANNA).

I scarce believe it!

ELISABETTA.

Shame upon her then!

[*Exit.*

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead mountain flowers'—

Ah well, my nurse has broken
The thread of my dead flowers, as she has broken
My china bowl. My memory is as dead.

[*Goes and replaces guitar.*

Strange that the words at home with me so long
Should fly like bosom friends when needed most.
So by your leave, if you would hear the rest,
The writing.

LADY GIOVANNA (*holding wreath toward him*).

There! my lord, you are a poet,
And can you not imagine that the wreath,
Set, as you say, so lightly on her head,
Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,
A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however
Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of her,
Was yet too bashful to return for it?

COUNT.

Was it so indeed? was it so? was it so?

[*Leans forward to take wreath, and touches* LADY GIOVANNA'S *hand, which she withdraws hastily; he places wreath on corner of chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*with dignity*).

I did not say, my lord, that it was so;
I said you might imagine it was so.

Enter FILIPPO *with bowl of salad, which he places on table.*

FILIPPO.

Here 's a fine salad for my lady, for tho' we have been a soldier, and ridden by his lordship's side, and seen the red of the battle-field, yet are we now drill-sergeant to his lordship's lettuces, and profess to be great in green things and in garden-stuff.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I thank thee, good Filippo. [*Exit* FILIPPO.

Enter ELISABETTA *with bird on a dish which she places on table.*

ELISABETTA (*close to table*).

Here's a fine fowl for my lady; I had scant time to do him in. I hope he be not underdone, for we be undone in the doing of him.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I thank you, my good nurse.

FILIPPO (*re-entering with plate of prunes*).

And here are fine fruits for my lady — prunes, my lady, from the tree that my lord himself planted here in the blossom of his boyhood — and so I, Filippo, being, with your ladyship's pardon, and as your ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-brother, would commend them to your ladyship's most peculiar appreciation.

[*Puts plate on table.*

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

LADY GIOVANNA (COUNT *leads her to table*).

Will you not eat with me, my lord?

COUNT.

I cannot;
Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have broken
My fast already. I will pledge you. Wine!
Filippo, wine!

[*Sits near table;* FILIPPO *brings flask, fills the* COUNT'S *goblet, then* LADY GIOVANNA'S; ELISABETTA *stands at the back of* LADY GIOVANNA'S *chair.*

COUNT.

It is but thin and cold,
Not like the vintage blowing round your castle.
We lie too deep down in the shadow here.
Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

[*They pledge each other and drink.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

If I might send you down a flask or two
Of that same vintage? There is iron in it.
It has been much commended as a medicine.
I give it my sick son, and if you be
Not quite recover'd of your wound, the wine
Might help you. None has ever told me yet
The story of your battle and your wound.

FILIPPO (*coming forward*).

I can tell you, my lady, I can tell you.

ELISABETTA.

Filippo! will you take the word out of your master's own mouth?

FILIPPO.

Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

COUNT.

Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle
We had been beaten — they were ten to one.
The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down,
I and Filippo here had done our best,
And, having passed unwounded from the field,
Were seated sadly at a fountain side,
Our horses grazing by us, when a troop,
Laden with booty and with a flag of ours
Ta'en in the fight —

FILIPPO.

Ay, but we fought for it back,
And kill'd —

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

COUNT.

A troop of horse —

FILIPPO.

Five hundred !

COUNT.

Say fifty !

FILIPPO.

And we kill'd 'em by the score !

ELISABETTA.

Filippo !

FILIPPO.

Well, well, well ! I bite my tongue.

COUNT.

We may have left their fifty less by five.
However, staying not to count how many,
But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag,
We mounted, and we dash'd into the heart of 'em.
I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck;
It served me for a blessed rosary.

I am sure that more than one brave fellow owed
His death to the charm in it.

ELISABETTA.

Hear that, my lady!

COUNT.

I cannot tell how long we strove before
Our horses fell beneath us; down we went
Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot. The night,
As some cold-manner'd friend may strangely do us
The truest service, had a touch of frost
That help'd to check the flowing of the blood.
My last sight ere I swoon'd was one sweet face
Crown'd with the wreath. *That* seem'd to come and go.
They left us there for dead!

ELISABETTA.

Hear that, my lady!

FILIPPO.

Ay, and I left two fingers there for dead. See, my lady! (*Showing his hand.*)

LADY GIOVANNA.

I see, Filippo!

FILIPPO.

And I have small hope of the gentleman gout in my great toe.

LADY GIOVANNA.

And why, Filippo? [*Smiling absently.*

FILIPPO.

I left him there for dead too.

ELISABETTA.

She smiles at him — how hard the woman is!
My lady, if your ladyship were not
Too proud to look upon the garland, you
Would find it stain'd —

COUNT (*rising*).

Silence, Elisabetta!

ELISABETTA.

Stain'd with the blood of the best heart that ever
Beat for one woman.

[*Points to wreath on chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*rising slowly*).

I can eat no more!

COUNT.

You have but trifled with our homely salad,
But dallied with a single lettuce-leaf;
Not eaten anything.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Nay, nay, I cannot.
You know, my lord, I told you I was troubled.
My one child Florio lying still so sick,
I bound myself, and by a solemn vow,
That I would touch no flesh till he were well
Here, or else well in heaven, where all is well.

[ELISABETTA *clears table of bird and salad:* FILIPPO *snatches up the plate of prunes and holds them to* LADY GIOVANNA.

FILIPPO.

But the prunes, my lady, from the tree that his lordship —

LADY GIOVANNA.

Not now, Filippo. My lord Federigo,
Can I not speak with you once more alone?

COUNT.

You hear, Filippo? My good fellow, go.

FILIPPO.

But the prunes that your lordship —

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

COUNT.

Ay, prune our company of thine own, and go!

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turning*).

Well, well! the women! [*Exit.*

COUNT.

And thou too leave us, my dear nurse, alone.

ELISABETTA (*folding up cloth and going*).

And me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[*Turns and curtseys stiffly to* LADY GIOVANNA, *then exit.* LADY GIOVANNA *takes out diamond necklace from casket.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

I have anger'd your good nurse; these old-world servants
Are all but flesh and blood with those they serve.
My lord, I have a present to return you,
And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

COUNT.

No, my most honour'd and long-worshipt lady,
Poor Federigo degli Alberighi
Takes nothing in return from you except
Return of his affection — can deny
Nothing to you that you require of him.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then I require you to take back your diamonds — [*Offering necklace.*
I doubt not they are yours. No other heart
Of such magnificence in courtesy
Beats — out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a prize
To trust with any messenger. I came
In person to return them. [COUNT *draws back.*

If the phrase
'Return' displease you, we will say — exchange
them.
For your — for your —

COUNT (*takes a step toward her and then back*).

For mine — and what of mine?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Well, shall we say this wreath and your sweet
rhymes?

COUNT.

But have you ever worn my diamonds?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!
For that would seem accepting of your love.
I cannot brave my brother — but be sure
That I shall never marry again, my lord!

COUNT.

Sure?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yes!

COUNT.

Is this your brother's order?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!

For he would marry me to the richest man
In Florence; but I think you know the saying —
'Better a man without riches, than riches without a man.'

COUNT.

A noble saying — and acted on would yield
A nobler breed of men and women. Lady,
I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath
That once you wore outvalues twenty-fold
The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear.
But lay them there for a moment!

[*Points to table.* LADY GIOVANNA *places necklace on table.*

And be you
Gracious enough to let me know the boon
By granting which, if aught be mine to grant,
I should be made more happy than I hoped
Ever to be again.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then keep your wreath,
But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still.

I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift
I ask for, to *my* mind and at this present
Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

COUNT.

It should be love that thus outvalues all.
You speak like love, and yet you love me not.
I have nothing in this world but love for you.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Love? it *is* love, love for my dying boy,
Moves me to ask it of you.

COUNT.

What? my time?
Is it my time? Well, I can give my time
To him that is a part of you, your son.
Shall I return to the castle with you? Shall I
Sit by him, read to him, tell him my tales,
Sing him my songs? You know that I can touch
The ghittern to some purpose.

LADY GIOVANNA.

No, not that!
I thank you heartily for that — and you,

I doubt not from your nobleness of nature,
Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

COUNT.

Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I that once
The wildest of the random youth of Florence
Before I saw you — all my nobleness
Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws
From you, and from my constancy to you.
No more, but speak.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I will. You know sick people,
More specially sick children, have strange fancies,
Strange longings; and to thwart them in their mood
May work them grievous harm at times, may even
Hasten their end. I would you had a son!
It might be easier then for you to make
Allowance for a mother — her — who comes
To rob you of your one delight on earth.
How often has my sick boy yearn'd for this!

Lady Giovanna.

THE FALCON.

Mezzotint by G. W. H. Ritchie.

I have put him off as often; but to-day
I dared not — so much weaker, so much worse
For last day's journey. I was weeping for him;
He gave me his hand: 'I should be well again
If the good Count would give me —'

COUNT.

Give me.

LADY GIOVANNA.

'His falcon.'

COUNT (*starts back*).

My falcon!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yes, your falcon, Federigo!

COUNT.

Alas, I cannot!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Cannot? Even so!
I fear'd as much. O this unhappy world!
How shall I break it to him? how shall I tell him?
The boy may die: more blessed were the rags
Of some pale beggar-woman seeking alms

For her sick son, if he were like to live,
Than all my childless wealth, if mine must die.
I was to blame — the love you said you bore me —
My lord, we thank you for your entertainment,
[*With a stately curtsey.*
And so return — Heaven help him! — to our son. [*Turns.*

COUNT (*rushes forward*).

Stay, stay, I am most unlucky, most unhappy!
You never had look'd in on me before,
And when you came and dipt your sovereign head
Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat with me.
I had but emptiness to set before you,
No, not a draught of milk, no, not an egg,
Nothing but my brave bird, my noble falcon,
My comrade of the house, and of the field.
She had to die for it — she died for you.
Perhaps I thought with those of old, the nobler
The victim was, the more acceptable
Might be the sacrifice. I fear you scarce
Will thank me for your entertainment now.

LADY GIOVANNA (*returning*).

I bear with him no longer.

COUNT.

No, Madonna!

And he will have to bear with it as he may.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I break with him for ever!

COUNT.

Yes, Giovanna,

But he will keep his love to you for ever!

LADY GIOVANNA.

You? you? not you! My brother! my hard brother!

O Federigo, Federigo, I love you!

Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo!

[*Falls at his feet.*

COUNT (*impetuously*).

Why, then the dying of my noble bird

Hath served me better than her living — then

[*Takes diamonds from table.*

These diamonds are both yours and mine — have won
Their value again — beyond all markets — there,
I lay them for the first time round your neck.
[*Lays necklace round her neck.*
And then this chaplet — No more feuds, but peace,
Peace and conciliation! I will make
Your brother love me. See, I tear away
The leaves were darken'd by the battle —
[*Pulls leaves off and throws them down.*
— crown you
Again with the same crown my Queen of Beauty.
[*Places wreath on her head.*
Rise — I could almost think that the dead garland
Will break once more into the living blossom.
Nay, nay, I pray you rise.
[*Raises her with both hands.*
We two together
Will help to heal your son — your son and mine —

We shall do it — we shall do it!

[*Embraces her.*

The purpose of my being is accomplish'd,
And I am happy!

LADY GIOVANNA.

And I too, Federigo.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

'A surface man of theories, true to none.'

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FARMER DOBSON.
MR. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* MR. HAROLD).
FARMER STEER (DORA *and* EVA'S *Father*).
MR. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).

HIGGINS
JAMES
DAN SMITH
JACKSON
ALLEN
} *Farm Labourers.*

DORA STEER.
EVA STEER.

SALLY ALLEN
MILLY
} *Farm Servants.*

Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

ACT I.

SCENE. — BEFORE FARMHOUSE.

Farming Men and Women. Farming Men carrying forms, etc., Women carrying baskets of knives and forks, etc.

FIRST FARMING MAN.

Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn?

SECOND FARMING MAN.

Ay, to be sewer! Be thou?

FIRST FARMING MAN.

Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birthdaäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he 'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe

th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all!

Second Farming Man.

Miss Dora be coomed back, then?

First Farming Man.

Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in theer now. (*Pointing to house.*) Owd Steer wur afeärd she would n't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin'; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one another like two sweet'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

Second Farming Man.

Foälks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

First Farming Man.

Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälks does n't hallus knaw thessens; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

Second Farming Man.

Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte?

"The town lay still in the low sunlight."

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

Etched by C. Menté.

First Farming Man.

Noä, not a bit.

Second Farming Man.

Why, coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn.

[*Exeunt.*

Dora *looks out of window. Enter* Dobson.

Dora (*singing*).

The town lay still in the low sunlight,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough;
O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May!

(*Nodding at* Dobson.) I 'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I have n't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden?

Dobson.

Noä, Miss. I ha' n't seed 'er neither.

Dora (*enters singing*).

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,
And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,
And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese;
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees;

O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May!

I don't know why I sing that song; I don't love it.

Dobson.

Blessings on your pretty voice, Miss Dora! Wheer did they larn ye that?

Dora.

In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

Dobson.

An' how did ye leäve the owd uncle i' Coomberland?

Dora.

Getting better, Mr. Dobson. But he'll never be the same man again.

Dobson.

An' how d'ye find the owd man 'ere?

Dora.

As well as ever. I came back to keep his birthday.

Dobson.

Well, I be coomed to keep his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be heighty to-daäy, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the day 's bright like a friend, but the wind east like an enemy. Help me to move this bench for him into the sun. (*They move bench.*) No, not that way — here, under the apple-tree. Thank you. Look how full of rosy blossom it is.

[*Pointing to apple-tree.*

DOBSON.

Theer be redder blossoms nor them, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Where do they blow, Mr. Dobson?

DOBSON.

Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Do they?

DOBSON.

And your eyes be as blue as —

DORA.

What, Mr. Dobson? A butcher's frock?

Dobson.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as —

Dora.

Bluebell, harebell, speedwell, bluebottle, succory, forget-me-not?

Dobson.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as —

Dora.

The sky? or the sea on a blue day?

Dobson.

Naäy then. I meän'd they be as blue as violets.

Dora.

Are they?

Dobson.

Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss, niver believing owt I says to ye — hallus a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye. I warrants ye 'll think moor o' this young Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us — the Lord knaws how — ye 'll think more on 'is little finger than hall my hand at the haltar.

DORA.

Perhaps, Master Dobson. I can't tell, for I have never seen him. But my sister wrote that he was mighty pleasant, and had no pride in him.

DOBSON.

He 'll be arter you now, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Will he? How can I tell?

DOBSON.

He 's been arter Miss Eva, haän't he?

DORA.

Not that I know.

DOBSON.

Did n't I spy 'em a-sitting i' the woodbine harbour togither?

DORA.

What of that? Eva told me that he was taking her likeness. He 's an artist.

DOBSON.

What 's a hartist? I doänt believe he 's iver a 'eart under his waistcoat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora: he 's no respect for the Queen, or

the parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt. I ha' heärd 'im a-gawin' on 'ud make your 'air — God bless it! — stan' on end. And wuss nor that. When theer wur a meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the bad times, he cooms up, and he calls out among our oän men, 'The land belongs to the people!'

Dora.

And what did *you* say to that?

Dobson.

Well, I says, s'pose my pig 's the land, and you says it belongs to the parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there wud n't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

Dora.

And what did he say to that?

Dobson.

Nowt — what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

Dora (*looking at* Dobson).

Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

Dobson.

I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

Dora.

Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget yourself in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

Enter Farming Man *from barn.*

Farming Man.

Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased if you 'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm.

[*Exit.*

Dora.

I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

Dobson.

Yeäs, yeäs! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit* Dora.) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she 'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I 'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. 'Coomly to look at,' says she — but she said it spitefullike. To look at — yeäs, 'coomly;' and she may n't be so fur out theer. But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur him as be handy wi' a book beänt but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

(*Enter* Wilson.)

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

Wilson.

Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

Dobson.

An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholards i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a knaw o' this Mr. Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin upon a bit o' päper, then a-lookin' ageän; and I taäked' im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor — but a beänt.

Wilson.

He 's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

Dobson.

Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogither — leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be knaw'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

Wilson.

Well, it 's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

Dobson.

Noä, but I haätes 'im.

Wilson.

Better step out of his road, then, for he 's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

Dobson.

An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

Enter Edgar, *reading — not seeing* Dobson *and* Wilson.

Edgar.

This author, with his charm of simple style
And close dialectic, all but proving man
An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numb'd me into apathy
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road
That breaks off short into the abysses — made me
A Quietist taking all things easily.

Dobson (*aside*).

There mun be summut wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

WILSON (*aside*).

Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON (*scornfully*).

An' thou doänt understan' it neither — and thou schoolmaster an' all!

EDGAR.

What can a man, then, live for but sensations,
Pleasant ones? men of old would undergo
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting
To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones — the while —
If possible, here! to crop the flower and pass.

DOBSON.

Well, I never 'eärd the likes o' that afoor.

WILSON (*aside*).

But I have, Mr. Dobson. It's the old Scripture text, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never comes to church, I thought better of him.

EDGAR.

'What are we,' says the blind old man in Lear?
'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport.'

DOBSON (*aside*).

Then the owd man i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme 'ereabouts.

EDGAR.

The Gods! but they, the shadows of ourselves,
Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,
And not for *her* sport either. She knows nothing.
Man only knows, the worse for him! for why
Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well — is not that the course of Nature too,
From the dim dawn of Being — her main law
Whereby she grows in beauty — that her flies
Must massacre each other? this poor Nature!

DOBSON.

Natur! Natur! Well, it be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd now; but I weänt.

EDGAR.

A Quietist taking all things easily — why —
Have I been dipping into this again
To steel myself against the leaving her?

[*Closes book, seeing* WILSON.

Good day!

WILSON.

Good day, sir.

[DOBSON *looks hard at* EDGAR.

EDGAR (*to* DOBSON).

Have I the pleasure, friend, of knowing you?

DOBSON.

Dobson.

EDGAR.

Good day, then, Dobson. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Good daäy then, Dobson!' Civil-spoken i'deed! Why, Wilson, tha 'eärd 'im thysen — the feller could n't find a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms five hoonderd haäcre.

WILSON.

You never find one for me, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

Noä, fur thou be nobbut schoolmaster; but I taäkes 'im for a Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

WILSON.

He can hardly be both, and he pays me regular every Saturday.

DOBSON.

Yeäs; but I haätes 'im.

Enter STEER, FARM MEN *and* WOMEN.

STEER (*goes and sits under apple-tree*).

Hev' ony o' ye seen Eva?

DOBSON.

Noä, Mr. Steer.

STEER.

Well, I reckons they 'll hev' a fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom 'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it kindly of all o' you that you be coomed — what 's the newspaäper word, Wilson? — celebrate — to celebrate my birthdaäy i' this fashion.

Niver man 'ed better friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master — and I knaws what men be, and what masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer, and now I be a landlord — burn a plowman, and now, as far as money goäs, I be a gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'ednt naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

DOBSON.

An' soä they be.

FIRST FARMING MAN.

Soä they be! soä they be!

SECOND FARMING MAN.

The Lord bless boäth on 'em!

THIRD FARMING MAN.

An' the saäme to you, master.

FOURTH FARMING MAN.

And long life to boäth on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

STEER.

Thank ye!

(*Enter* EVA.)

Wheer 'asta been?

EVA (*timidly*).

Many happy returns of the day, father.

STEER.

They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they 'll be 'appy.

DOBSON.

Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

STEER.

An' why should n't I last to a hoonderd? Haäle! why should n't I be haäle? fur thaw I be heighty this very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an'

then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why should n't I be haäle? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre — it be mine now — afoor ony o' ye wur burn — ye all knaws the ten-aäcre — I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times; hallus hup at sunrise, and I 'd drive the plow straäit as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder — then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

Eva.

Methuselah, father.

Steer.

Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou 'll put one word fur another as I does.

Dobson.

But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

STEER.

Roomatics! Noä; I laäme't my knee last night running arter a thief. Beänt there house-breäkers down i' Littlechester, Dobson — doänt ye hear of ony?

DOBSON.

Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmith's was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

STEER.

So I thowt, and I heärd the winder — that 's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to* EVA.) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red? Did 'e git into thy chaumber?

EVA.

Father!

STEER.

Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell ageän coalscuttle and my kneeä gev waäy or I 'd ha' cotched 'im, but afoor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

Eva.

Got thro' the window again?

Steer.

Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'im once a-stealin' coäls, an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it would n't fit — seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at* Eva.) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white?

Eva.

Fright, father!

Steer.

Maäke thysen eäsy. I 'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

Eva (*clasping her hands*).

No, no, father! Towser 'll tear him all to pieces.

Steer.

Let him keep awaäy, then; but coom, coom! let 's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of

aäle i' the long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lassies 'ull hev a dance.

Eva (*aside*).

Dance! small heart have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

Steer.

Wheer be Mr. Edgar? about the premises?

Dobson.

Hallus about the premises!

Steer.

So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' 'im; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we 'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

Eva.

Yes, father! [*Exit.*

Steer.

Coom along then, all the rest o' ye! Churchwarden be a coomin', thaw me and 'im we niver 'grees about the tithe; and Parson mebbe, thaw

he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to my likings; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde — but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome; and I 've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer 'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

ALL.

Yeäs, yeäs! Three cheers for Mr. Steer.

[*All exeunt except* DOBSON *into barn.*

Enter EDGAR.

DOBSON (*who is going, turns*).

Squire! — if so be you be a squire.

EDGAR.

Dobbins, I think.

DOBSON.

Dobbins, you thinks; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

EDGAR.

Well?

Dobson.

And I thinks I 'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

Edgar.

Ay, if you 'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

Dobson.

Coom, coom, that 's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye; but I promised one of the Misses I would n't meddle wi' ye, and I weänt.

[*Exit into barn.*

Edgar.

Jealous of me with Eva! Is it so?
Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I
Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be
The best way out of it, if the child could keep
Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy.
But I must free myself from this entanglement.
I have all my life before me — so has she —
Give her a month or two, and her affections
Will flower toward the light in some new face.
Still I am half-afraid to meet her now.
She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears.
Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate

Traditions, ever since my narrow father,
After my frolic with his tenant's girl,
Made younger elder son, violated the whole
Tradition of our land, and left his heir,
Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live
By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought
Comes down among the crowd, and man perceives that
The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him
A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd
May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers. Marriage!
That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old Harold,
Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,
He, too, would oust me from his will, if I
Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself —
The storm is hard at hand will sweep away
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, marriage
One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,
Following their best affinities, will each
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears;

Good wishes, not reproaches; with no fear
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and no need
Of veiling their desires.
Conventionalism,
Who shrieks by day at what she does by night,
Would call this vice; but one time's vice may be
The virtue of another; and Vice and Virtue
Are but two masks of self; and what hereafter
Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the gulf
Of never-dawning darkness?

(*Enter* Eva.)

My sweet Eva,
Where have you lain in ambush all the morning?
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,
And that should make you happy, if you love her!
But you look troubled.

Eva.

Oh, I love her so,
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself.
We never kept a secret from each other;
She would have seen at once into my trouble,

And ask'd me what I could not answer. Oh, Philip,
Father heard you last night. Our savage mastiff,
That all but kill'd the beggar, will be placed
Beneath the window, Philip.

EDGAR.

Savage, is he?
What matters? Come, give me your hand and kiss me
This beautiful May-morning.

EVA.

The most beautiful
May we have had for many years!

EDGAR.

And here
Is the most beautiful morning of this May.
Nay, you must smile upon me! There — you make
The May and morning still more beautiful,
You, the most beautiful blossom of the May.

Eva.

Dear Philip, all the world is beautiful
If we were happy, and could chime in with it.

Edgar.

True; for the senses, love, are for the world;
That for the senses.

Eva.

Yes.

Edgar.

And when the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the tribe,
He, following his own instincts as his God,
Will enter on the larger golden age;
No pleasure then taboo'd: for when the tide
Of full democracy has overwhelm'd
This Old world, from that flood will rise the New,
Like the Love-goddess, with no bridal veil,
Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked Nature
In all her loveliness.

Eva.

What are you saying?

Edgar.

That, if we did not strain to make ourselves
Better and higher than Nature, we might be
As happy as the bees there at their honey
In these sweet blossoms.

Eva.

Yes; how sweet they smell!

Edgar.

There! let me break some off for you.

[*Breaking branch off.*

Eva.

My thanks.
But, look, how wasteful of the blossom you are!
One, two, three, four, five, six — you have robb'd
poor father
Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell you
He wishes you to dine along with us,
And speak for him after — you that are so
clever!

EDGAR.

I grieve I cannot; but, indeed —

EVA.

What is it?

EDGAR.

Well, business. I must leave you, love, to-day.

EVA.

Leave me, to-day! And when will you return?

EDGAR.

I cannot tell precisely; but —

EVA.

But what?

EDGAR.

I trust, my dear, we shall be always friends.

EVA.

After all that has gone between us — friends!
What, only friends? [*Drops branch.*

EDGAR.

All that has gone between us
Should surely make us friends.

EVA.

But keep us lovers.

EDGAR.

Child, do you love me now?

EVA.

Yes, now and ever.

EDGAR.

Then you should wish us both to love for ever.
But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever,
Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,
Begins to flutter in them, and at last
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever;
While, had you left him free use of his wings,
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?

EVA.

But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;
'Till death us part' — those are the only words,
The true ones — nay, and those not true enough,
For they that love do not believe that death
Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try
To fright me? Tho' you are a gentleman,
I but a farmer's daughter —

Edgar.

Tut! you talk
Old feudalism. When the great Democracy
Makes a new world —

Eva.

And if you be not jesting,
Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,
Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

Edgar (*moved*).

Then — (*aside*) Shall I say it? — (*aloud*) fly
with me to-day.

Eva.

No! Philip, Philip, if you do not marry me,
I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

Edgar.

Then, if we needs must be conventional,
When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns
Before your gaping clowns?

Eva.

Not in our church —
I think I scarce could hold my head up there.
Is there no other way?

EDGAR.

Yes, if you cared
To fee an over-opulent superstition,
Then they would grant you what they call a licence
To marry. Do you wish it?

EVA.

Do I wish it?

EDGAR.

In London.

EVA.

You will write to me?

EDGAR.

I will.

EVA.

And I will fly to you thro' the night, the storm—
Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,
As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see,
I was just out of school, I had no mother—
My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,
Told me to trust you: yes, in everything—
That was the only *true* love; and I trusted—
Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.

How could you — Oh, how could you? — nay,
how could I?
But now you will set all right again, and I
Shall not be made the laughter of the village,
And poor old father not die miserable.

Dora (*singing in the distance*).

O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May!

Edgar.

Speak not so loudly; that must be your sister.
You never told her, then, of what has past
Between us.

Eva.

Never!

Edgar.

Do not till I bid you.

Eva.

No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*

Edgar (*moved*).

How gracefully there she stands
Weeping — the little Niobe! What! we prize
The statue or the picture all the more

"*Follow my art among these quiet fields.*

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

Etched from painting by Whistler.

When we have made them ours! Is she less
lovable,
Less lovely, being wholly mine? To stay —
Follow my art among these quiet fields,
Live with these honest folk
And play the fool!
No! she that gave herself to me so easily
Will yield herself as easily to another.

EVA.

Did you speak, Philip?

EDGAR.

Nothing more, farewell.
[*They embrace.*

DORA (*coming nearer*).

O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May!

EDGAR (*still embracing her*).

Keep up your heart until we meet again.

EVA.

If that should break before we meet again?

EDGAR.

Break! nay, but call for Philip when you will,
And he returns.

EVA.

Heaven hears you, Philip Edgar!

EDGAR (*moved*).

And *he* would hear you even from the grave.
Heaven curse him if he come not at your call!

[*Exit.*

Enter DORA.

DORA.

Well, Eva!

EVA.

Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you have been away from home! Oh, how often I have wished for you! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

DORA.

For ever, you foolish child! What's come over you? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you praised so in your first letters? You have n't even mentioned him in your last?

EVA.

He has gone to London.

DORA.

Ay, child; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence? Have you fancied yourself in love with him? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

EVA.

Not now — presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy — I think, quite happy now.

DORA (*taking* EVA'S *hand*).

Come, then, and make them happy in the long barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round hay-stack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

Enter all from barn laughing. EVA *sits reluctantly under apple-tree.* STEER *enters, smoking, sits by* EVA.

Dance.

ACT II.

Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

Scene. — A Meadow. On one side a Pathway going over a rustic Bridge. At back the Farmhouse among trees. In the distance a Church Spire.

Dobson *and* Dora.

Dobson.

So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be deäd, Miss Dora, beänt he?

Dora.

Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his death-bed and his burial.

Dobson.

It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hes n't he left ye nowt?

Dora.

No, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he?

DORA.

Fonder of poor Eva — like everybody else.

DOBSON (*handing* DORA *basket of roses*).

Not like me, Miss Dora; and I ha' browt these roses to ye — I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Littlechester — so I allus browt soom on 'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

DORA.

I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

DOBSON.

Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

DORA.

I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

[*Takes basket, places some in her dress.*

DOBSON.

Eva's saäke. Yeäs. Poor gell, poor gell! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I 'd ha' done owt fur 'er mysen: an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em — the Lord bless 'er — 'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taäke 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

DORA.

Do you want them back again?

DOBSON.

Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to saäy to ye.

DORA.

Why, Farmer, you should be in the hay-field looking after your men; you could n't have more splendid weather.

DOBSON.

I be a going theer; but I thowt I 'd bring tha them roses fust. The weather 's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaāky. S'iver we 've led moäst on it.

DORA.

Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either, as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

DOBSON.

I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarved fer ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

DORA.

I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

Dobson.

Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nobbut hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fireside. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

Dora.

You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. *(Pulls out a letter.)* I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. 'Dearest Dora, — I have lost myself, and am lost for ever to you and my poor father. I thought Mr. Edgar the best of men, and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river. — Eva.'

Dobson.

Be that my fault?

Dora.

No; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the

fatting of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry?

DOBSON.

Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should!

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And plaäy the pianner, if ye liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

DORA.

No, no; it cannot be.

DOBSON.

And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

Dora.

Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson? I tell you, it cannot be.

Dobson.

Eh, lass! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentlefoälk, and see what's coomed on it.

Dora.

That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune had born *you* into the estate of a gentleman, you would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hay-field. Good afternoon.

[*Exit.*

Dobson.

'Farmer Dobson!' Well, I be Farmer Dobson; but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' knaw'd better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she 'd been a-reädin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur

"He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield."

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

Photogravure from painting by W. L. Taylor.

W. L. TAYLOR

taäkin' me down, like a laädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew; but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt laäy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else — blaäme't if I beänt!

Enter Haymakers *with a load of hay.*

The last on it, eh?

First Haymaker.

Yeäs.

Dobson.

Hoäm wi' it, then. [*Exit surlily.*

First Haymaker.

Well, it be the last loäd hoäm.

Second Haymaker.

Yeäs, an' owd Dobson should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

Sally Allen.

Glum! he be wuss nor glum. He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a-workin' along o' one

side wi' one another, and he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at sweet'arts niver worked well togither; and I telled '*im* 'at sweet'arts allus worked best togither; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

James.

Why, lass, doänt tha knaw he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts togither like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jalousies.

Sally.

Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt *I* cares.

First Haymaker.

Well, but, as I said afoor, it be the last loäd hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper — 'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

All.

Ay! 'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

Song.

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
Wi' the wild white rose, an' the woodbine sa gaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue —
What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin' o' you,
And you an' your Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa graäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue —
Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
When me an' my Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue?
Why, coom then, owd feller, I 'll tell it to you;
For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be true,
To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end of the daäy,
And the last loäd hoäm.

All.

Well sung!

James.

Fanny be the naäme i' the song, but I swopt it fur *she*. [*Pointing to* Sally.

Sally.

Let ma aloän afoor foälk, wilt tha?

First Haymaker.

Ye shall sing that ageän to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us a bit o' supper.

Sally.

I weänt goä to owd Dobson; he wur rude to me i' tha haäy-field, and he 'll be rude to me ageän to-night. Owd Steer 's gotten all his grass down and wants a hand, and I 'll goä to him.

First Haymaker.

Owd Steer gi'es nubbut cowd tea to *'is* men, and owd Dobson gi'es beer.

Sally.

But I 'd like owd Steer's cowd tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye. [*Going.*

James.

Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

SALLY.

I tell'd tha to let ma aloän!

JAMES.

Why, was n't thou and me a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o' the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd upo' us? I can't let tha aloän if I would, Sally. [*Offering to kiss her.*

SALLY.

Git along wi' ye, do! [*Exit.*

[*All laugh; exeunt singing.*

To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end o' the daäy,
An' the last loäd hoäm.

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Not Harold! 'Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!'
Her phantom call'd me by the name she loved.
I told her I should hear her from the grave.
Ay! yonder is her casement. I remember
Her bright face beaming starlike down upon me
Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since I left
her

Here weeping, I have ranged the world, and sat
Thro' every sensual course of that full feast
That leaves but emptiness.

Song.

To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
To the end o' the daäy,
An' the last loäd hoäm.

Harold.

Poor Eva! O my God, if man be only
A willy-nilly current of sensations —
Reaction needs must follow revel — yet —
Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he *must* have
Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?
Remorse then is a part of Destiny,
Nature a liar, making us feel guilty
Of her own faults.
My grandfather — of him
They say, that women —
Oh, this mortal house,
Which we are born into, is haunted by
The ghosts of the dead passions of dead men;
And these take flesh again with our own flesh,

And bring us to confusion.

He was only
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa*.
There, there, is written in invisible inks
'Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,
Cowardice, Murder' — and the heat and fire
Of life will bring them out, and black enough,
So the child grow to manhood: better death
With our first wail than life —

Song (*further off*).

Till the end o' the daäy,
An' the last loäd hoäm,
Loäd hoäm.

This bridge again! (*Steps on the bridge.*)
How often have I stood
With Eva here! The brook among its flowers!
Forget-me-not, meadow-sweet, willow-herb.
I had some smattering of science then,
Taught her the learned names, anatomized
The flowers for her — and now I only wish
This pool were deep enough, that I might plunge
And lose myself for ever.

Enter Dan Smith (*singing*).

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä
Thruf slush an' squad
When roäds was bad,
But hallus 'ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,
Fur boäth on 'em knawed as well as mysen
That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.
Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

The beer 's gotten oop into my 'eäd. S'iver I mun git along back to the farm, fur she tell'd ma to taäke the cart to Littlechester.

Enter Dora.

Dora.

Half an hour late! why are you loitering here? Away with you at once.

[*Exit* Dan Smith.

(*Seeing* Harold *on bridge.*)

Some madman, is it,
Gesticulating there upon the bridge?
I am half afraid to pass.

Harold.

Sometimes I wonder,

When man has surely learnt at last that all
His old-world faith, the blossom of his youth,
Has faded, falling fruitless — whether then
All of us, all at once, may not be seized
With some fierce passion, not so much for Death
As against Life! all, all, into the dark —
No more! — and science now could drug and balm us
Back into nescience with as little pain
As it is to fall asleep.
This beggarly life,
This poor, flat, hedged-in field — no distance — this
Hollow Pandora-box,
With all the pleasures flown, not even Hope
Left at the bottom!
Superstitious fool,
What brought me here? To see her grave? her ghost?
Her ghost is everyway about me here.

Dora (*coming forward*).

Allow me, sir, to pass you.

HAROLD.

Eva!

DORA.

Eva!

HAROLD.

What are you? Where do you come from?

DORA.

From the farm
Here, close at hand.

HAROLD.

Are you — you are — that Dora,
The sister. I have heard of you. The likeness
Is very striking.

DORA.

You knew Eva, then?

HAROLD.

Yes — I was thinking of her when — Oh, yes,
Many years back, and never since have met
Her equal for pure innocence of nature,
And loveliness of feature.

DORA.

No, nor I.

HAROLD.

Except, indeed, I have found it once again
In your own self.

DORA.

You flatter me. Dear Eva
Was always thought the prettier.

HAROLD.

And *her* charm
Of voice is also yours; and I was brooding
Upon a great unhappiness when you spoke.

DORA.

Indeed, you seem'd in trouble, sir.

HAROLD.

And you
Seem my good angel who may help me from it.

DORA (*aside*).

How worn he looks, poor man! who is it, I wonder.
How can I help him? (*Aloud.*) Might I ask your name?

HAROLD.

Harold.

Dora.

I never heard her mention you.

Harold.

I met her first at a farm in Cumberland —
Her uncle's.

Dora.

She was there six years ago.

Harold.

And if she never mention'd me, perhaps
The painful circumstances which I heard —
I will not vex you by repeating them —
Only last week at Littlechester, drove me
From out her memory. She has disappear'd,
They told me, from the farm — and darker news.

Dora.

She has disappear'd, poor darling, from the world —
Left but one dreadful line to say, that we
Should find her in the river; and we dragg'd
The Littlechester river all in vain:
Have sorrow'd for her all these years in vain.

And my poor father, utterly broken down
By losing her — she was his favourite child —
Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,
But for the slender help that I can give,
Fall into ruin. Ah! that villain, Edgar,
If he should ever show his face among us,
Our men and boys would hoot him, stone him,
hunt him
With pitchforks off the farm, for all of them
Loved her, and she was worthy of all love.

HAROLD.

They say, we should forgive our enemies.

DORA.

Ay, if the wretch were dead I might forgive
him;
We know not whether he be dead or living.

HAROLD.

What Edgar?

DORA.

Philip Edgar of Toft Hall
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him?

Harold.

Slightly.

(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I known myself!

Dora.

This Edgar, then, is living?

Harold.

Living? well —

One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Somerset
Is lately dead.

Dora.

Dead! — is there more than one?

Harold.

Nay — now — not one, (*aside*) for I am Philip Harold.

Dora.

That one, is he then — dead!

Harold (*aside*).

My father's death,
Let her believe it mine; this, for the moment,
Will leave me a free field.

DORA.

Dead! and this world
Is brighter for his absence, as that other
Is darker for his presence.

HAROLD.

Is not this
To speak too pitilessly of the dead?

DORA.

My five-years' anger cannot die at once,
Not all at once with death and him. I trust
I shall forgive him — by-and-by — not now.
O sir, you seem to have a heart; if you
Had seen us that wild morning when we found
Her bed unslept in, storm and shower lashing
Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing for her,
That desolate letter, blotted with her tears,
Which told us we should never see her more —
Our old nurse crying as if for her own child,
My father stricken with his first paralysis,
And then with blindness — had you been one of us
And seen all this, then you would know it is not
So easy to forgive — even the dead.

HAROLD.

But sure am I that of your gentleness
You will forgive him. She you mourn for seem'd
A miracle of gentleness — would not blur
A moth's wing by the touching; would not crush
The fly that drew her blood; and, were she living,
Would not — if penitent — have denied him *her*
Forgiveness. And perhaps the man himself,
When hearing of that piteous death, has suffer'd
More than we know. But wherefore waste your heart
In looking on a chill and changeless Past?
Iron will fuse, and marble melt; the Past
Remains the Past. But you are young, and — pardon me —
As lovely as your sister. Who can tell
What golden hours, with what full hands, may be
Waiting you in the distance? Might I call
Upon your father — I have seen the world —
And cheer his blindness with a traveller's tales?

Dora.

Call if you will, and when you will. I cannot
Well answer for my father; but if you
Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least
Will bid you welcome, and will listen to you.
Now I must go.

Harold.

But give me first your hand:
I do not dare, like an old friend, to shake it.
I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege
When you shall know me better.

Dora (*aside*).

How beautiful
His manners are, and how unlike the farmer's!
You are staying here?

Harold.

Yes, at the wayside inn
Close by that alder-island in your brook,
'The Angler's Home.'

Dora.

Are *you* one?

HAROLD.

No, but I
Take some delight in sketching, and the country
Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants
Seem semi-barbarous.

DORA.

I am glad it pleases you;
Yet I, born here, not only love the country,
But its inhabitants too; and you, I doubt not,
Would take to them as kindly, if you cared
To live some time among them.

HAROLD.

If I did,
Then one at least of its inhabitants
Might have more charm for me than all the country.

DORA.

That one, then, should be grateful for your preference.

HAROLD.

I cannot tell, tho' standing in her presence.
(*Aside.*) She colours!

DORA.

Sir!

HAROLD.

Be not afraid of me,
For these are no conventional flourishes.
I do most earnestly assure you that
Your likeness —

[*Shouts and cries without.*

DORA.

What was that? my poor blind father —

Enter FARMING MAN.

FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora, Dan Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i' the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the body up inter your chaumber, and they be all a-callin' for ye.

DORA.

The body! — Heavens! I come!

HAROLD.

But you are trembling.
Allow me to go with you to the farm.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

What feller wur it as 'a' been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora? (*Looking after him.*) Seeäms I ommost knaws the back on 'im — drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they 'd hed anew o' gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! — Noä — yeäs — thaw the feller 's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh, lad, if it be thou, I 'll Philip tha! a-plaäyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora — I 'll Soomerset tha!

I 'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I 'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I 'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him.* Noä! Fur she 'd niver 'a' been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Yeäs! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I 'll maäke 'er knaw! I 'll maäke 'er knaw!

(*Enter* Harold.)

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im. [*Exit.*

Harold.

How the clown glared at me! that Dobbins, is it,
With whom I used to jar? but can he trace me
Thro' five years' absence, and my change of name,
The tan of Southern summers and the beard?
I may as well avoid him.
Ladylike!
Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness!
How came she by it? — a daughter of the fields,
This Dora!

She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate;
I almost think she half return'd the pressure
Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom
Dark as the yew? but may not those, who march
Before their age, turn back at times, and make
Courtesy to custom? and now the stronger motive,
Misnamed free-will — the crowd would call it conscience —
Moves me — to what? I am dreaming; for the past
Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' hers —
A spell upon me! Surely I loved Eva
More than I knew! or is it but the past
That brightens in retiring? Oh, last night
Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,
I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river
Flow'd thro' my dreams — if dreams they were. She rose
From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,
And her cry rang to me across the years,
'I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!
Come, you will set all right again, and father
Will not die miserable.' I could make his age

A comfort to him — so be more at peace
With mine own self. Some of my former friends
Would find my logic faulty; let them. Colour
Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted
On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must
Move in the line of least resistance when
The stronger motive rules.
But she hates Edgar.
May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy
Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her
Love Harold first, and then she will forgive
Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself
She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now —
For her own sake *then*, if not for mine — not now —
But by-and-by.

Enter Dobson *behind.*

Dobson.

By-and-by — eh, lad, dosta knaw this paäper?
Ye dropt it upo' the road. 'Philip Edgar, Esq.'
Ay, you be a pretty squire. I ha' fun' ye out,
I hev. Eh, lad, dosta knaw what tha meäns wi'
by-and-by? Fur if ye be goin' to sarve our

Dora as ye sarved our Eva — then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er — if she weänt — look to thysen, for, by the Lord, I 'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion craw — noä — thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

HAROLD.

Dobbins, I think!

DOBSON.

I beänt Dobbins.

HAROLD.

Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

DOBSON.

Tha lies! What hasta been saäyin' to *my* Dora?

HAROLD.

I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

DOBSON.

Tha lies!

HAROLD (*pulling out a newspaper*).

Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there — under the deaths.

DOBSON.

'O' the 17th, Philip Edgar, o' Toft Hall, Soomerset.' How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then?

HAROLD.

Naturally enough; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

DOBSON.

An' 'ow coom thou by the letter to 'im?

HAROLD.

Naturally again; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me — Harold.

DOBSON.

'Arold! 'Arold! 'Arold, so they be.

HAROLD.

My name is Harold! Good day, Dobbins!

[*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Arold! The feller 's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' muddled ma. Deäd! It mun

be true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hes n't naw business 'ere wi' *my* Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I 'll stick to thee — stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay! and I 'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Dang tha!

ACT III.

Scene. — A Room in Steer's House. Door leading into Bedroom at the back.

Dora (*ringing a handbell*).

Milly!

Enter Milly.

Milly.

The little 'ymn? Yeäs, Miss; but I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned mysen haäfe on it.

> O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
> Nor ever strike him blow for blow;
> For all the souls on earth that live
> To be forgiven must forgive.
> Forgive him seventy times and seven;
> For all the blessed souls in Heaven
> Are both forgivers and forgiven.

But I 'll git the book ageän, and larn mysen the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor dark; ye ringed fur that, Miss, did n't ye?

Dora.

No, Milly; but if the farming-men be come for their wages, to send them up to me.

Milly.

Yeäs, Miss. [*Exit.*

Dora (*sitting at desk counting money*).

Enough at any rate for the present. (*Enter* Farming Men.) Good afternoon, my friends. I am sorry Mr. Steer still continues too unwell to attend to you, but the schoolmaster looked to the paying you your wages when I was away, did n't he?

Men.

Yeäs; and thanks to ye.

Dora.

Some of our workmen have left us, but he sent me an alphabetical list of those that remain, so, Allen, I may as well begin with you.

Allen (*with his hand to his ear*).

Halfabitical! Taäke one o' the young uns fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I wur hallus

scäared by a big word; leästwaäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

DORA.

I spoke of your names, Allen, as they are arranged here (*shows book*) — according to their first letters.

ALLEN.

Letters! Yeäs, I sees now. Them be what they larns the childer' at school, but I were burn afoor schoolin'-time.

DORA.

But, Allen, tho' you can't read, you could whitewash that cottage of yours where your grandson had the fever.

ALLEN.

I 'll hev it done o' Monday.

DORA.

Else if the fever spread, the parish will have to thank you for it.

ALLEN.

Meä? why, it be the Lord's doin', noän o' mine; d'ye think *I'd* gi'e 'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the saäme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

DORA (*calling out names*).

Higgins, Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham, Skipworth! (*All take money.*) Did you find that you worked at all the worse upon the cold tea than you would have done upon the beer?

HIGGINS.

Noä, Miss; we worked naw wuss upo' the cowd tea; but we 'd ha' worked better upo' the beer.

DORA.

Come, come, you worked well enough, and I am much obliged to all of you. There 's for you, and you, and you. Count the money and see if it 's all right.

MEN.

All right, Miss; and thank ye kindly.

[*Exeunt* LUSCOMBE, NOKES, OLDHAM, SKIPWORTH.

DORA.

Dan Smith, my father and I forgave you stealing our coals.

[DAN SMITH *advances to* DORA.

Dan Smith (*bellowing*).

Whoy, O lor, Miss! that wur sa long back, and the walls sa thin, and the winders brokken, and the weather sa cowd, and my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyin'-in.

Dora.

Did n't I say that we had forgiven you? But, Dan Smith, they tell me that you — and you have six children — spent all your last Saturday's wages at the ale-house; that you were stupid drunk all Sunday, and so ill in consequence all Monday that you did not come into the hay-field. Why should I pay you your full wages?

Dan Smith.

I be ready to taäke the pledge.

Dora.

And as ready to break it again. Besides, it was you that were driving the cart — and I fear you were tipsy then, too — when you lamed the lady in the hollow lane.

Dan Smith (*bellowing*).

O lor, Miss! noä, noä, noä! Ye sees the holler laäne be hallus sa dark i' the arternoon, and wheere the big esh-tree cuts athurt it, it gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to laäme the laädy, and meä coomin' along pretty sharp an' all?

Dora.

Well, there are your wages; the next time you waste them at a pot-house you get no more from me. (*Exit* Dan Smith.) Sally Allen, you worked for Mr. Dobson, did n't you?

Sally (*advancing*).

Yeäs, Miss; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I could n't abide 'im.

Dora.

Why should he be rough with you? You are as good as a man in the hay-field. What 's become of your brother?

Sally.

'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

DORA.

And your sweetheart — when are you and he to be married?

SALLY.

At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

DORA.

You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

SALLY.

An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(*Going — returns.*) 'A cotched ma about the waaist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet'art, an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an' I telled feyther on 'im.

DORA.

What is all this, Allen?

ALLEN.

Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

HIGGINS.

That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

Jackson.

An' meä, Miss.

Allen.

An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we 'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally 'd telled us on' im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

Dora.

Who?

Allen.

Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

Dora.

Mr. Edgar?

Allen.

Theer, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im — not me.

Dora.

He 's dead, man — dead; gone to his account — dead and buried.

ALLEN.

I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im. Now then?

DORA.

Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

ALLEN.

Then yon mun be his brother, an' we 'll leather *'im.*

DORA.

I never heard that he had a brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it — and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to

marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me: yet — though I can be sorry for him — as the good Sally says, 'I can't abide him' — almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then, he, too — will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and singing the same hymn? I fear not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl's love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection,

and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

O happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest,
O brook, that brawlest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest,
O tower spiring to the sky,
O graves in daisies drest,
O Love and Life, how weary am I,
And how I long for rest!

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me — father, this poor girl, the farm, everything; and they both love me — I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings* Eva *forward.*) Why, you look better.

Eva.

And I feel so much better that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business

of the farm; but I must not be known yet. Has any one found me out, Dora?

Dora.

Oh, no; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

Eva.

Yes — this Milly.

Dora.

Poor blind father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she know you? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with father to-day?

Eva.

Do you think that I may? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

Dora.

Why? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane?

EVA.

Bruised; but no bones broken.

DORA.

I have always told father that the huge old ash-tree there would cause an accident some day; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

EVA.

If it had killed one of the Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

DORA.

Come, come, keep a good heart! Better for me! That 's good. How better for me?

EVA.

You tell me you have a lover. Will he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living?

DORA.

No; I am sure that when we are married he will be willing that you and father should live with us, for, indeed, he tells me that he met you

once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

EVA.

Taken with me; who was he? Have you told him I am here?

DORA.

No; do you wish it?

EVA.

See, Dora; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

DORA.

But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies?

EVA.

That last was my father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours — this Mr. Harold — is a gentleman?

DORA.

That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I lost my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much —

EVA.

Poor Dora!

DORA.

That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

EVA.

Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman?

DORA.

Could I love him else?

EVA.

And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be shamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

DORA.

Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Was n't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Little-

chester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all ladies? Was n't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of me in a drawing-room, indeed! See here! 'I hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?' (*Curtsies.*) 'Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day? (*Curtsies.*) I can recommend our Voltigeur.' 'I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!' (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

Eva.

I have heard that 'your Lordship,' and 'your Ladyship,' and 'your Grace' are all growing old-fashioned!

Dora.

But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble

"Shamed of me in a drawing-room, indeed!"

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

Photogravure from painting by W. L. Taylor.

you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn into bits. I could n't make it out. What was it?

Eva.

From him! from him! He said we had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself 'Yours gratefully'—fancy, Dora, 'gratefully'! 'Yours gratefully'!

Dora.

Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

Eva.

Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

Dora.

It is only Milly.

(*Enter* Milly, *with basket of roses.*)

Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

Milly.

Pleäse, Miss, Mr. Dobson telled me to saäy he 's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

Dora.

Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

Milly.

Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

Dora.

Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

Milly.

Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

Dora.

Not to-day. What are you staying for?

MILLY.

Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweär-ing like onythink.

DORA.

And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit* MILLY.) But, Eva, why did you write 'Seek me at the bottom of the river'?

EVA.

Why? because I meant it! — that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs — but I was so mad that I mounted upon the parapet —

DORA.

You make me shudder!

EVA.

To fling myself over, when I heard a voice, 'Girl, what are you doing there?' It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a

pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the Sister took me to her house, and bit by bit — for she promised secrecy — I told her all.

Dora.

And what then?

Eva.

She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I could n't. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, 'Go home;' but I had n't the heart or face to do it. And then — what would father say? I sank so low that I went into service — the drudge of a lodging-house — and when the mistress died, and I appealed to the Sister again, her answer — I think I have it about me — yes, there it is!

Dora (*reads*).

'My dear Child, — I can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret; your father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he

dies. — Sister Agatha.' Sister Agatha is right. Don't you long for father's forgiveness?

Eva.

I would almost die to have it!

Dora.

And he may die before he gives it; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once. (*Rings bell. Enter* Milly.) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer?

Milly.

He 's been a-moänin' and a-groänin' in 'is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin' oop.

Dora.

Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

Milly.

Yeäs, Miss, I will. [*Exit* Milly.

Dora.

I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our father as he was five years ago.

He is much altered; but I trust that your return — for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite — will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

EVA (*clinging to* DORA).

Oh, Dora, Dora!

Enter STEER *led by* MILLY.

STEER.

Hes the cow cawved?

DORA.

No, father.

STEER.

Be the colt deäd?

DORA.

No, father.

STEER.

He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäd?

DORA.

Not that I know.

STEER.

What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

DORA (*taking* STEER'S *arm*).

Well, father, I have a surprise for you.

STEER.

I ha' niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

DORA.

Eva has come home.

STEER.

Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

DORA.

No, father, that was a mistake. She 's here again.

STEER.

The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I

could n't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on 'em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

Dora.

No, father, she 's here.

Steer.

Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother saäy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

Eva (*falling at his feet*).

Oh, forgive me! forgive me!

Steer.

Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys.

[*Exit* Steer *led by* Milly.

Dora (*smoothing* Eva's *forehead*).

Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

EVA.

It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[DORA *takes* EVA *into inner room.*

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

DORA (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*).

Quiet! Quiet! What is it?

MILLY.

Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

DORA.

Below?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he 'll coom up if ye lets 'im.

DORA.

Tell him, then, that I 'm waiting for him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss.

[*Exit.* DORA *sits pensively and waits.*

Enter Harold.

Harold.

You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek
That ever charm'd the plowman of your wolds
Might wish its rose a lily, could it look
But half as lovely. I was speaking with
Your father, asking his consent — you wish'd me —
That we should marry: he would answer nothing,
I could make nothing of him; but, my flower,
You look so weary and so worn! What is it
Has put you out of heart?

Dora.

It puts me in heart
Again to see you; but indeed the state
Of my poor father puts me out of heart.
Is yours yet living?

Harold.

No — I told you.

Dora.

When?

HAROLD.

Confusion! — Ah well, well! the state we all
Must come to in our spring-and-winter world
If we live long enough! and poor Steer looks
The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd
To the earth he came from, to the grave he goes to,
Beneath the burthen of years.

DORA.

More like the picture
Of Christian in my 'Pilgrim's Progress' here,
Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen of sin.

HAROLD.

Sin! What sin?

DORA.

Not his own.

HAROLD.

That nursery-tale
Still read, then?

DORA.

Yes; our carters and our shepherds
Still find a comfort there.

HAROLD.

Carters and shepherds!

DORA.

Scorn! I hate scorn. A soul with no religion —
My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, anchor, compass — might be
Blown every way with every gust and wreck
On any rock; and tho' you are good and gentle,
Yet if thro' any want —

HAROLD.

Of this religion?
Child, read a little history, you will find
The common brotherhood of man has been
Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions
More than could ever have happen'd thro' the want
Of any or all of them.

DORA.

But, O dear friend,
If thro' the want of any — I mean the true one —
And pardon me for saying it — you should ever

Be tempted into doing what might seem
Not altogether worthy of you, I think
That I should break my heart, for you have taught me
To love you.

HAROLD.

What is this? some one been stirring
Against me? he, your rustic amourist,
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,
This Dobson of your idyll?

DORA.

No, Sir, no!
Did you not tell me he was crazed with jealousy,
Had threaten'd even your life, and would say anything?
Did *I* not promise not to listen to him,
Nor even to see the man?

HAROLD.

Good; then what is it
That makes you talk so dolefully?

DORA.

I told you —
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just now,

One that has been much wrong'd, whose griefs
are mine,
Was warning me that if a gentleman
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he would be
Sooner or later shamed of her among
The ladies, born his equals.

HAROLD.

More fool he!
What, I that have been call'd a Socialist,
A Communist, a Nihilist — what you will! —

DORA.

What are all these?

HAROLD.

Utopian idiotcies.
They did not last three Junes. Such rampant
weeds
Strangle each other, die, and make the soil
For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons
To root their power in. I have freed myself
From all such dreams, and some will say because
I have inherited my uncle. Let them.

But — shamed of you, my Empress! I should prize
The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it
Dark with the soot of slums.

Dora.

But I can tell you,
We Steers are of old blood, tho' we be fallen.
See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms on mantelpiece.*)
For I have heard the Steers
Had land in Saxon times; and your own name
Of Harold sounds so English and so old
I am sure you must be proud of it.

Harold.

Not I!
As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it
For some three thousand acres. I have land now
And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

Dora.

And *what* was
Your name before?

HAROLD.

Come, come, my girl, enough
Of this strange talk. I love you, and you me.
True, I have held opinions, hold some still,
Which you would scarce approve of: for all that,
I am a man not prone to jealousies,
Caprices, humours, moods; but very ready
To make allowances, and mighty slow
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe
I could forgive — well, almost anything —
And that more freely than your formal priest,
Because I know more fully than *he* can
What poor earthworms are all and each of us,
Here crawling in this boundless Nature. Dora,
If marriage ever brought a woman happiness
I doubt not I can make you happy.

DORA.

You make me
Happy already.

HAROLD.

And I never said
As much before to any woman living.

DORA.

No?

HAROLD.

No! by this true kiss, *you* are the first
I ever have loved truly. [*They kiss each other.*

EVA (*with a wild cry*).

Philip Edgar!

HAROLD.

The phantom cry! *You* — did *you* hear a cry?

DORA.

She must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep.

HAROLD.

Who must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep?

DORA.

Your pardon for a minute. She must be waked.

HAROLD.

Who must be waked?

DORA.

I am not deaf: you fright me.
What ails you?

HAROLD.

Speak.

DORA.

You know her, Eva.

HAROLD.

Eva!

[EVA *opens the door and stands in the entry.*

She!

EVA.

Make her happy, then, and I forgive you.

[*Falls dead.*

DORA.

Happy! What? Edgar? Is it so? Can it be?
They told me so. Yes, yes! I see it all now.
Oh, she has fainted! Sister, Eva, sister!
He is yours again — he will love *you* again;
I give him back to you again. Look up!
One word, or do but smile! Sweet, do you hear me?

[*Puts her hand on* EVA'S *heart.*

There, there — the heart, O God! — the poor young heart
Broken at last — all still — and nothing left
To live for.

[*Falls on body of her sister.*

HAROLD.

Living . . . dead . . . She said 'all still.
Nothing to live for.'
She — she knows me — now . . .
(*A pause.*)
She knew me from the first, she juggled with me,
She hid this sister, told me she was dead —
I have wasted pity on her — not dead now —
No! acting, playing on me, both of them.
They drag the river for her! no, not they!
Playing on me — not dead now — a swoon — a scene —
Yet — how she made her wail as for the dead!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Mister 'Arold.

HAROLD (*roughly*).

Well?

MILLY.

The owd man's coom'd ageän to 'issen, an' wants
To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

HAROLD.

The what?

MILLY.

The marriage.

HAROLD.

The marriage?

MILLY.

Yeäs, the marriage.
Granny says marriages be maäde i' 'eaven.

HAROLD.

She lies! They are made in hell. Child, can't you see?
Tell them to fly for a doctor.

MILLY.

Oh, law — yeäs, Sir.
I 'll run fur 'im mysen. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

All silent there,
Yes, deathlike! Dead? I dare not look: if dead,
Were it best to steal away, to spare myself,

And her too, pain, pain, pain?
My curse on all
This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams
Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities
That blast our natural passions into pains!

Enter Dobson.

Dobson.

You, Master Hedgar, Harold, or whativer
They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs
By haäfe a scoor o' naämes — out o' the chaumber! [*Dragging him past the body.*

Harold.

Not that way, man! Curse on your brutal strength!
I cannot pass that way.

Dobson.

Out o' the chaumber!
I 'll mash tha into nowt.

Harold.

The mere wild-beast!

Dobson.

Out o' the chaumber, dang tha!

Harold.

Lout, churl, clown!

[*While they are shouting and struggling*
Dora *rises and comes between them.*

Dora (*to* Dobson).

Peace, let him be: it is the chamber of Death!
Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,
A hundred times more worth a woman's love,
Than this, this — but I waste no words upon him:
His wickedness is like my wretchedness —
Beyond all language.

(*To* Harold.)

You — you see her there!
Only fifteen when first you came on her,
And then the sweetest flower of all the wolds,
So lovely in the promise of her May,
So winsome in her grace and gaiety,
So loved by all the village people here,
So happy in herself and in her home —

Dobson (*agitated*).

Theer, theer! ha' done. I can't abeär to see her. [*Exit.*

Dora.

A child, and all as trustful as a child!
Five years of shame and suffering broke the heart
That only beat for you; and he, the father,
Thro' that dishonour which you brought upon us,
Has lost his health, his eyesight, even his mind.

Harold (*covering his face*).

Enough!

Dora.

It seem'd so; only there was left
A second daughter, and to her you came
Veiling one sin to act another.

Harold.

No!
You wrong me there! hear, hear me! I wish'd, if you — [*Pauses.*

Dora.

If I —

HAROLD.

Could love me, could be brought to love me
As I loved you —

DORA.

What then?

HAROLD.

I wish'd, I hoped
To make, to make —

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

'T were best to make an end of my lost life.
O Dora, Dora!

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

Make, make! I cannot find the word — forgive it —
Amends.

DORA.

For what? to whom?

HAROLD.

To him, to you!

[*Falling at her feet.*

DORA.

To *him!* to *me!*

No, not with all your wealth,
Your land, your life! Out in the fiercest storm
That ever made earth tremble— he, nor I —
The shelter of *your* roof— not for one moment —
Nothing from *you!*
Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the plague,
Smitten with fever in the open field,
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of Death —
Nothing from you!
But she there — her last word
Forgave — and I forgive you. If you ever
Forgive yourself, you are even lower and baser
Than even I can well believe you. Go!

[*He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.*

NOTES.

NOTES.

HAROLD.

First published late in the year 1876, but dated 1877. See Vol. I. p. 92, and compare page 105.

Page 5. — *Yon grimly-glaring, treble brandish'd scourge.* — A remarkable comet appeared in 1066. Several comets have had two or more tails; that of 1744 had six.

Page 7. — *Molochize them.* — Sacrifice them, as infants were sacrificed to Moloch. See Leviticus, xviii. 21, Jeremiah, xxxii. 35, etc.

Page 12. — *The kingly touch that cures the evil.* — Edward the Confessor was the first English monarch who professed to cure scrofula — the 'king's evil,' as it came to be called — by touching the victims of the disease; and the practice continued until the reign of Anne. Compare 'Macbeth,' iv. 3. 140 fol.

Page 13. — *The great church of Holy Peter.* — Westminster Abbey.

Page 30. — *Thou art my music!* — Compare Shakespeare, 'Sonnets,' 8: 'Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?' and 128: 'How oft when thou, my music, music play'st,' etc.

Page 45. — *We hold our Saxon woodcock in the springe.* — The woodcock was the popular synonym for a fool, the bird being supposed to have no brains. Compare Ford, 'Lover's Melancholy,' ii. 1.: 'A headpiece — of woodcock without brains in it;' 'Hamlet,' i. 3. 115: 'Ay, springes to catch woodcocks,' etc.

PAGE 77. — *Woe, knave, to thy familiar and to thee!* — All the English editions have 'Woe knave to thy familiar,' etc.

PAGE 92. — *The kingliest Abbey in all Christian lands, etc.* — See on page 13 above.

PAGE 106. — *The Saints at peace, etc.* — All the English editions point thus: —

the Saints at peace
The Holiest of our Holiest one should be
This William's fellow-tricksters; etc.

PAGE 109. — *The Pope and that Archdeacon Hildebrand.* — Alexander II. and Hildebrand, who became Gregory VII. in 1073.

PAGE 116. — *Like the great King of all.* — Most of the English editions, including those of 1894 and 1895, print 'the great king of all.' The first edition has 'King.'

PAGE 130. — *Thy fierce forekings had clench'd their pirate hides, etc.* — This was actually done sometimes.

PAGE 132. — *The Raven's wing.* — The raven was the symbol of Denmark.

PAGE 142. — *A world of tonguesters.* — Compare 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After:' 'thro' the tonguesters we may fall.'

PAGE 149. — *Son Harold, I thy king, etc.* — The visions here may have been suggested by those in 'Richard III.' v. 3.

THE FALCON.

'The Falcon' was brought out at St. James's Theatre in London on the 18th of December, 1879, but was not printed until 1884.

The story is from Boccaccio, being the ninth novel of the fifth day in the 'Decameron.' It had already been put into verse by 'Barry Cornwall' and Longfellow.

PAGE 183. — *Darning, your lordship.* — The English editions omit the comma.

PAGE 185. — *Not the head of a toad, and not a heart like the jewel in it.* — Cf. 'As You Like It,' ii. 1. 12: —

> Sweet are the uses of adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

PAGE 187. — *Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man!* — For 'jerks,' compare 'Love's Labour's Lost,' iv. 2. 129: 'the jerks of invention' (sallies, or flashes, of imagination).

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

First produced at the Globe Theatre in London on the 11th of November, 1882 (see Vol. I. pp. 98–101), but not published until December, 1886, in the volume entitled 'Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,' etc.

PAGE 242. — '*What are we?*' *says the blind old man in Lear.* — See 'Lear,' iv. 1. 38: —

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport.

PAGE 256. — *Like the Love-goddess, etc.* — Aphrodite (Venus) rising from the sea.

PAGE 261. — *I had no mother.* — Compare Browning, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, ii.: 'I had no mother, and I loved him so!'

PAGE 280. — *Scizzars and Pumpy.* — Cæsar and Pompey.

PAGE 297. — *An' maäted, an' muddled ma.* — For 'maäted' (stupefied) compare 'Macbeth,' v. 1. 86: 'My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight,' etc.

PAGE 304. — *The Queen's Real Hard Tillery.* — The Royal Artillery.

PAGE 338. — *Make, make! I cannot find the word — forgive it.* — In the first edition this is properly made one line, as it is in the one-volume editions; but in the ten-volume editions of 1893, 1894, etc., 'Make, make!' is a separate line.

END OF VOL. IX.

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